



Moreland City Council



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2000 Mayor's Speech
Democracy, Diversity and Opportunity



Democracy, Diversity and Opportunity



Cr Stella Kariofyllidis,
Mayor

Motion

The Mayor's Speech be received and endorsed as Council policy, and that it form the basis of the 2000 Council Plan.

Introduction

In 2001, the Commonwealth of Australia will be 100 years old. Australia has witnessed many changes during its first century of federation.

One of the real achievements we can all celebrate at this time is the positive contribution that people from diverse communities all over the world have made in shaping this country and making Australia their home.

To begin with, I'd like to take time to reflect on this year's Australia Day address. A woman of great courage and character, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue CBE, AM gave the address.

Dr O'Donoghue commented in her address to the nation that 'the idea that a woman, and an Aboriginal woman...should be speaking...on such an important occasion would have been undreamt of 200 years ago. And an improbable scenario even in much more recent times'.

As a first generation Greek migrant woman, I take inspiration from Dr O'Donoghue's words and, in fact, inspiration from the leadership she demonstrated in accepting the offer to deliver the oratory for Australia Day on a number of levels.

Dr O'Donoghue issued a challenge to all men and women to demonstrate strength in committing to serve for the common good of all people in our society.

After serving as a Councillor on the first democratically elected Moreland Council, I was re-elected to the second Moreland Council. I now stand before you tonight, proud to be recognised as the first woman mayor of the City of Moreland. I am also proud to be recognised tonight as the first

Greek-born migrant woman to become a mayor in Australia, a country I love and now have the privilege to call 'home'.

Like Dr O'Donoghue, I came from a community that does not speak English as its first language and when I left Greece, the role of women in political life was, culturally, the domain of men.

As a migrant woman, I know the difficulties faced by migrant women. I have experienced the prejudices, the hardships, and the lack of facilities and support for newly arrived ethnic women.

Being subjected to this disadvantage only served to harden my resolve and encouraged me to become involved in the community.

I now have a unique opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge I acquired through disadvantage. It is my intention to demonstrate in my term as Mayor of the City of Moreland, a commitment to:

- serving the Moreland community in a manner that values our diverse cultural communities;
- empowering women in order to ensure that they benefit from the principles of access and equity;
- promoting awareness amongst women of the opportunities available to them;
- championing the importance of being assertive; and
- developing our self-esteem as women.

I am deeply indebted to my fellow Councillors for the faith they have shown in asking me to take on the challenge of the office of Mayor in the next twelve months.

I take over as Mayor this evening from a person I have great respect for, Cr Andrew Rowe.

This Speech was delivered at the Moreland Civic Centre on 27 March 2000.

Andrew brought to the office of Mayor a great passion for both democratic practice and the Moreland community rarely seen in political life. Andrew always demonstrates great respect for all people. Andrew has a true sense of the broader social and political context and how Moreland plays an important role in furthering a real sense of community democratic governance.

Andrew presented the 1999 Mayor's Speech titled 'Fostering Democracy and Building Community'. This document articulated a three-year implementation platform for the second democratically elected Moreland Council. It was a document endorsed by all Councillors.

As Councillors, we make no apology for the high expectations it demands of the Council.

'Fostering Democracy and Building Community' represents a framework by which the performance of this Council can be critically assessed at all times during its elected tenure.

The Mayor's Speech I present here this evening is an evolution of the substantial vision that went into creating that original document.

The document I submit tonight will be the principal reference for Councillors and officers in determining a focus of energies and resources in the forthcoming mayoral year.

I refer once more to the Australia Day address. Dr O'Donoghue stated that 'progress is about good management more than good luck. It is about commitment, creativity and hard work. Issues of identity and citizenship have never been higher or more publicly on the agenda.'

Let us all take inspiration from Dr O'Donoghue and ensure that the next twelve months will be a defining time for our community. Champion democracy, celebrate diversity and seize the many opportunities that they may create.

The Vision for Moreland

This address is the result of many important influences.

- The legacy of the first Moreland Council.
- The local government of Moreland's values.
- The defining political issues which lie at the heart of contemporary Australian public life.
- The critical issues we face as a municipality.
- The commitments made by the second Moreland Council in its first year, 'Fostering Democracy and Building Community'.

These issues are all central in defining community life in Moreland and underpin this address.

In the tradition of the mayors who have undertaken this role before, the 2000 Mayor's Speech defines Council's priorities and plans for the next twelve months. It has already touched on the values that will drive us and has provided some insight into how we see our role. It also identifies the critical issues which will shape the future of the City.

Council reaffirms its 1999 vision of a strong community-driven local government which delivers:

- Enhanced democracy
- An environmentally sustainable urban environment
- A just and equitable society
- Responsive local government administration
- Sustainable employment opportunities.

The initiatives presented in this document, in combination with those articulated in the 1999 Mayor's Speech, will play a significant role in achieving that vision.

The 2000 Mayor's Speech will now outline the key governance issues for the forthcoming mayoral year in response to the vision we have described. Following on from that will be a review of the previous twelve months, the highlights and successes of the first mayoral term. Details of commitments Council will undertake to achieve in the next year are then outlined.

Democracy, Diversity and Opportunity

Diversity and Governance

Last year at this time we spoke about Race and the Republic as defining issues for Australia and for Moreland. As we come closer to the centenary of federation in 2001, these issues remain ever present.

It is also important to reflect on statements of principle and vision. Political and public leadership often fails to articulate vision and commitment to matters of principle.

Not so long ago we saw the rise of Hansonism and the attempt by many to recast and abandon Australia's commitment to multiculturalism. We saw cherished notions of social justice and simple Australian dictums like 'a fair go' under serious attack. Moreland met with its community leaders and its faith communities. Moreland sought ways to support and strengthen our community's commitment to multiculturalism and social justice.

In 1998, Moreland Council developed a message 'One Community, Proudly Diverse'. At this time, Moreland Council's first Mayor from a non-English speaking background, Cr Tony Helou, faced an Australian political landscape scarred by Hansonite racism.

Council is committed to the concept of 'One Community, Proudly Diverse' but ask that it be recognised as an ethos. It will be an ethos that will guide the way in which Councillors and all staff of the Moreland Council, will approach our governance responsibilities, our civic duties and our work for the Moreland community.

Diversity was obvious at all its levels but we focused on the notion of Diversity mainly in terms of ethnicity. The principle of 'One Community, Proudly Diverse' has its own momentum and its own internal motivation. When we talk about diversity we are now talking about the diversity of cultures, the diversity of ethnicity, the diversity of language, the diversity of faith communities, the diversity of gender, the diversity of age, the diversity of wealth, the diversity of education, the diversity of interests, the diversity of sexuality and sexual preference, the diversity of needs, and all the ways diversity is manifested in our community.

Diversity is also clearly evident in political choices and opinion. Moreland residents have diverse views on many issues, often those views can be brought together, whilst at other times they are mutually exclusive.

Living in a community like Moreland makes one cherish and celebrate the diversity of our city and our community. The celebration and championing of diversity is part of the Moreland ethos.

As a community that clearly acknowledges and is proud of its diversity we all have a role to play in celebrating difference of opinion and difference of view. We have an obligation as an elected and democratic sphere of government to hear all views, to elicit all arguments, attempt to resolve differences, but to ultimately make decisions.

Local governments consult and listen, but as communities that fight to maintain democracy, elected people ultimately do have to make decisions. The reality of our diverse community will often mean an individual or a group is not satisfied with the outcome. The very process of having the debate, bringing out the views and seeking outcomes is essentially democratic as long as governments provide access to decision-making and offer genuine participation in the processes.

The idea of democracy is fragile, it is always under threat from the loud voice of the disaffected and those less committed to democratic process than getting their own way.

When Moreland declares 'One Community, Proudly Diverse', it fully embraces its diversity at all levels. Diversity does not simply mean ethnicity but it certainly includes it. Moreland is proud of the complex and difficult path in representing the highest ideals of democratic practice and balancing the complex needs of its community.

Women

Women have special and particular roles to play in our community. The years of the Howard Federal Government have seen the options available to women severely constrained. Three issues in particular demonstrate this: childcare, the GST and welfare reform. Cuts to childcare subsidies have led many families to decide that it is

simply not financially worthwhile for the mother to work. These women are now deprived of the independence, self-esteem and friendships that work can bring. Their families are deprived of the incomes they once earned. In a city like Moreland, where average incomes are below the state average, this loss of income can be devastating.

The GST will also add to the inequities experienced by women. The poorest families in our country are those headed by a sole woman. The gap between the rich and poor in Australia is increasing. More and more 'battlers' are struggling to live within their means. Yet the new tax system will provide the highest tax cuts to those in the highest income brackets, that is those earning over \$70,000 pa, while at the same time increasing the cost to low income earners of the necessities of life. This will clearly increase inequality. A shift away from direct taxes on income is regressive and shifts the burden of taxes from the rich to the poor, many of whom are women. The new tax system seems to be designed to ensure that those best able to look after government will again best look after themselves.

The Howard Government's approach to welfare and welfare reform discriminates against women. We need to recognise that many of those dependent on social security are using it to supplement low wages, part time work and lack of paid work. Therefore, it is the employers of underpaid labour who are benefiting from many of the so-called welfare payments. And it is women who supply the majority of the labour in personal services and care. Those women who perform unrecognised, unpaid work and therefore don't have access to workplace bargaining arrangements need supplementary payments to allow them to do their caring work effectively. Welfare should be a positive program of sustainable social support, which supplies the financial support to enable all citizens to participate fully in their society. It is a matter of democracy, not a budget imposition.

Women are typically paid less and in jobs less secure than men. And yet women continue to provide the bulk of the unpaid caring work in our community, find time to be active in community and volunteer roles, and raise their children and grandchildren to be the future citizens of our City.

Council's commitment to women has been reflected in new initiatives around International Women's Day 2000 with a three-day expo run for and by women on themes of relevance to women of Moreland. Empowering women through information and support on economic rights, childcare, health, leisure, educational opportunities, all with a multicultural focus has ensured a lasting impact of our International Women's Day commitments.

Council will highlight the special role that women play in our community. Council will encourage all women to be proud of their achievements and be bold in their expectations of the community's support for them.

Infrastructure

Council recognises that the replacement and repair of Moreland's ageing infrastructure needs serious attention. Council needs to allocate an increasing proportion of its rate revenue to this end and is doing this. Moreland is advocating for increased funding from other spheres of government to the maintenance and replacement of infrastructure as the current balance is heavily skewed against local government.

Council recognises the balance between maintaining and enhancing social and community programs, and the maintenance and rebuilding of infrastructure. Moreland remains committed to achieving a balanced response to these demands in consultation with its community.

Moreland has 500 km of roads, 1091 km of kerb and channel, 1206 km of footpaths, 107 km of laneways and 427 km of stormwater drainage. That is a lot of concrete, without which our city would cease to function. The combined cost of these assets is \$535.3 million.

These assets are rapidly ageing. The roads in Brunswick are around 120 years old, Coburg's are 80 years old, and Fawkner and Glenroy's are around 50 years old. Most of these assets last for between 75 and 100 years, meaning that we are in a stage in our infrastructure life cycle that requires increased spending for renewal.

It is interesting that one of the original requirements of a town to become a city was that it have paved roads. Nowadays that challenge is keeping them in working order. As our current infrastructure ages, renewal of it

must increasingly be a focus of Moreland Council.

Over the last four years, Council has ploughed tens of millions of dollars into new and renewed infrastructure. Council has also increased its spending on infrastructure to help meet these demands, but more is needed.

This has not been easy for this local government. The previous state government's 20% rate cut has had, and still does have, a considerable effect on our ability to fund capital works. It was a false economy. The type of false economy that dominated the previous state government's economic philosophy.

So this year, the renewal of our current infrastructure will become a focus.

To meet this challenge we must do a number of things. We must work with the community to ensure that our spending priorities are correct. We need to focus our spending on renewal of the roads, drains and footpaths that we currently have. We have to set up a system to ensure that the maintenance of this infrastructure is kept up.

And we will do this.

We will also seek to redress the inequitable balance between the funding responsibilities.

Currently, local government funds a larger proportion of roads and has no recompense for increasing use and the shorter lifetimes that ensue.

The Federal Government has access to fuel levies which obviously increase as car usage does, that way, funding for improvements and maintenance is directly linked to the higher use, wear and tear. Moreland believes that local government should have access to funding for roads, from petrol levies.

Moreland Council also recognises the impact that increased housing and population density is having upon our infrastructure and will embark on a campaign to gain powers to allow us to levy a charge on new developments for the purposes of contributing to the cost of infrastructure. It is not satisfactory that developers currently take in profit, the cost of infrastructure that they would have paid in newly developed areas.

Reconciliation

Moreland Council's commitment to reconciliation is based on a long-term view that there can be no real advance of ourselves as a nation without reconciliation between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Australians.

Council believes that true and lasting reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians lies at the heart of our national identity. Without this we cannot move forward as a mature and honest nation. Central to this reconciliation is justice for aboriginal people. This is the great, unfinished business of our country.

In the past twelve months, Council has actively participated in the reconciliation movement by:

- Formally and repeatedly recognising the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the land that Moreland is in.
- Funding and supporting cultural exchange programs that bring aboriginal people from diverse communities together.
- Participating at the national level in debates surrounding aboriginal rights and justice.

To facilitate further work, Council will establish a 'Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Working Party'. This working party will guide Council's involvement in the reconciliation debate, placing justice and respect for Aboriginal people at the centre of our involvement. We will seek to provide opportunities for the Moreland community to enter into this undertaking through information and education projects, cultural expression and opportunities for public forums and debate.

Environment

Moreland Council is proud of its record of implementing environmentally sustainable strategies and its conservation record. Our new Moreland Civic Centre in Coburg utilises state of the art, energy efficient, and environmentally friendly, technologies. The Centre includes a solar pergola for the generation of electricity. This electricity is then channelled back into operating the building. Council also became the first local government in Australia to purchase green power for its municipal buildings.

In 1999, Council planted 15,000 trees. This adds to the beauty of our streets and provides

habitat for birds, shade for pedestrians and contributes to cleaner air. In 2000, Council will plant at least another 15,000 trees.

Council is sensitive of the need for all citizens to look at ways in which they can contribute to the conservation of our precious natural resources. Individually, we can all make a difference. For example, the wise use of water, recycling and purchasing products that minimise the amount of waste they leave behind in the rubbish bin, can all make a significant difference to preserving our environment for future generations.

As an organisation, Council is committed to developing and implementing environmentally friendly initiatives. In 2000, we will develop a 'Storm Water Management Plan' to address pollution runoff and its impact on our drainage system. We will actively seek out measures that conserve water and we will encourage residents to do likewise.

The potential threat to health created by Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) is of great concern to Council. Council will develop a policy designed to minimise the harm of EMR and we will work with business and industry to ensure sources of EMR meet such standards.

In 1999, a business plan and articles of incorporation were prepared for the innovative Moreland Energy Foundation (MEF). The formation documents for the MEF have been lodged with the relevant minister and are awaiting approval. Since Moreland announced its intention to establish a sustainable energy research, development and education foundation, two other cities have followed. The Foundation will commence its important groundbreaking work in 2000.

All of our decisions, be they in terms of Reconciliation, Women or the Environment, should be made with the next seven generations in mind, not the next election. All residents have an opportunity to play a positive role and work collaboratively for the benefit of our diverse community.

Governance in Moreland

A year ago, we discussed in the 1999 Mayor's Speech, some key issues facing this City and the Council. Some of these issues have been resolved, others remain ongoing, and emerging events in some instances have changed some priorities.

CityLink

The opening of CityLink was going to test the effectiveness of the new transport system including the effect on Melbourne's northern suburbs through which the toll way extends. Expectations of drivers, quite naturally avoiding the toll, have seen significant increases in traffic volumes on suburban streets. As yet, Moreland's pre-emptive no right-turn ban program has been substantially successful in limiting through traffic on Moreland's local street network. We will continue to monitor noise, pollution and traffic volumes.

Traffic Management

Council had identified that the ongoing task of managing traffic flows throughout the City was a critical issue that required sensitive handling in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. Council continued to address Traffic Management and became committed to area wide traffic management with the community as the way forward in reducing the speed of traffic in local streets.

Human and Legal Services Reforms

State Government-driven reforms to primary health, community support and youth and family services were planned for trial. Council has expressed grave concerns about the potentially negative effect that these changes in service delivery will have on local community based services. The change in State Government has brought about a major shift in emphasis of these programs.

Rate Justice

Council's participation in the Rate Equity Campaign continued. The campaign aims to ensure that commercial operators are rated appropriately for privately operated or owned infrastructure. The growth in the privatisation of public infrastructure makes this a crucial issue over which Council must

secure some capacity to levy commercial operators.

Council will continue to reject the privatisation of public assets and infrastructure.

Pentridge

The Pentridge site was sold by the State Government by tender. The redevelopment of this site represents the single largest change in land use in Moreland's history. The successful transition from a prison to other uses represents an unparalleled opportunity for the City.

Governmental Relationships

The relationship with the State Government changed significantly with the election of the Bracks Government. The new State Government has offered to work in partnership with local governments and respect their autonomy. The new government committed to wide-ranging consultation with the local government sector and removed very quickly the demands of Compulsory Competitive Tendering. The partnership offered to local governments by the Bracks Government is welcomed in Moreland.

Republic Vote

Council saw the opportunity to participate in the Republic Debate as a significant step in representing the expressed mood of the Moreland community. The 1997 Municipal Constitutional Convention articulated a pro yes position which the Council advocated and the local vote endorsed.

HACC Campaign

Moreland Council has spearheaded a campaign to increase federal and state funding for our home and community care, which is in high demand in our ageing municipality. Council believes greater funds are needed to allow proper care to be provided to our residents in need, many of whom are frail and isolated, are on low incomes, and from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Thanks to our campaign, the Minister for Aged Care Services will review the funding arrangements and support is growing among other councils for urgent action on this issue. In 2000, Council will continue to give this issue our highest priority.

Detailed Commitments from 1999 The Year in Review – Specific Achievements

Young People

Council worked with young people to deliver a Youth Summit in August 1999 and is currently implementing the recommendations of the 1998 and 1999 Youth Summits. At the 1999 Summit, Council made space available for youth support agencies operating in the Moreland district to discuss their services with young people directly.

Community Banking

In order to assist the community in accessing declining banking facilities in Moreland, Council has facilitated the establishment of a group that is currently building support for the establishment of a Community Bank.

Budgetary Policy

Council has continued to manage its finances in a responsible manner, helping to ensure that Council can meet the needs of the entire Moreland community. Council remains debt free and has put a higher proportion of its increased rate revenue directly toward the capital budget.

Education

Council has sponsored meetings with principals of Moreland State secondary schools over the last twelve months. Council is working with the schools to conduct an audit of education in Moreland. Council is conducting research into enrolment patterns, perception of secondary schooling in Moreland and is undertaking a program that deals directly with students at risk of leaving school early.

Genetically Modified Food

In May 1999, Council became the first local government in Victoria to respond to growing community concerns that GE foods pose a threat to food quality and the health of its citizens. Council resolved to identify and remove GE foods from its food services until it is convinced of their safety. A public forum was convened in June 1999 and support was given to the Citizens' Alliance call for a five-year freeze on the introduction of GE foods.

Information Society

Council is implementing the Community Information Strategy which will increase citizens' access to Council, community groups, businesses, sporting clubs and community based services.

Council successfully ensured that Moreland was not affected by the Y2K computer problem.

Use of Technology for Improved Access

Citizens have been given greater access to Council decision-making processes through the improved use of technology. The amount of Council documentation available online has been improved and citizens now have the opportunity of emailing Council Officers directly as well as calling.

Mechanics Institute Performing Arts Centre/Counihan Gallery In Brunswick

Last year saw the completion and opening of the Counihan Gallery In Brunswick and the Mechanics Institute Performing Arts Centre. These two facilities are the hub of the Moreland Arts Precinct, and have already attracted widespread critical acclaim.

Moreland Civic Centre Opening

In March 2000, Council officially opened the Moreland Civic Centre in Coburg as the central administrative base for the local government of Moreland. This development aimed to improve citizen access and governance as well as representing a major commitment on Council's part to demonstrating the benefits of energy saving and environmental sustainability.

Eco Power

Council became the first local government in Australia to purchase green power for its municipal buildings. The purchase of green power underlies our commitment to renewable energy sources.

Pascoe Vale and Coburg Outdoor Pool Redevelopments

The redevelopment of the Pascoe Vale Pool has strengthened its viability and usage. It is now a neighbourhood facility offering meeting space and opportunities for new leisure activities. The improvements to the pool include repair work, heating, shade covers and a toddler water play area.

Major upgrades were undertaken to the Coburg Outdoor Pool including increasing on-site security measures, landscaping, barbecues, picnic tables and a basketball pad.

Health Plan

The launch of Moreland's Municipal Health Plan 1999–2001 identified key health issues unique to our city. In October 1999, the Health Plan was awarded the 1999 State Heart Foundation Local Government Award in the category of Outstanding Policy for Structural Change, and in November 1999 won a national commendation from the National Heart Foundation.

Welfare Reform

Moreland has strongly defended the rights of the unemployed and those on a range of government pensions against attempts by the Federal Government to reduce access for thousands of our residents in its Welfare Reform process. Moreland has presented the Federal Government with a detailed analysis of income support patterns showing that there is little scope to restrict access to individuals in need and argued for government action on job creation and educational opportunities.

Gambling

The massive jump in spending on gambling in Moreland from \$11,000 in 1992 to over \$55 million in 1998/99 confirms Council's views about the impact of electronic gaming machines in low income communities such as Moreland. Our calls for tougher controls on the number and location of electronic gaming are reflected in the State Government's policies on gaming.

Airport Rail link

Action by residents in the north-west part of Moreland, concerned about the proposal to build a high speed rail link to Melbourne Airport, culminated in a State Government review of the plans, including a more thorough look at options to use alternative routes, such as the Albion Street corridor. Moreland was pleased to assist residents in their campaign and will continue to represent their wide-ranging concerns about noise, safety, congestion and amenity of their neighbourhoods.

Heritage Protection

Council has finalised the comprehensive review of heritage sites and precincts throughout Moreland. The process was intensely consultative, with precinct meetings held for contentious sites and many opportunities for citizens of Moreland to have their say on heritage matters.

CityLink Traffic Management

Council embarked on a comprehensive community consultation last April asking what measures should be put in place to respond to the imposition of tolls on the Tullamarine Freeway. The results were ten morning no right-turn bans designed to keep traffic legitimately avoiding the tolls on arterial roads instead of local streets. The outcomes are to be constantly monitored.

Bike Plan

The Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy calls for the development of the Moreland Bike Plan, a coherent and coordinated plan to enhance cycling as a viable commuter and recreational mode of transport. The draft Moreland Bike Plan is currently in the public domain for consultation and will be finalised by the end of June 2000.

Moreland City Plan

The Moreland Municipal Strategic Statement ('Moreland City Plan') is now lodged with the Minister for Planning and will be approved by him shortly. The plan involved a thorough review of all the planning zones throughout the entire City. The document was the subject of a very open, public process of critique, with all planning zones in the City advertised and citizens encouraged to contribute.

Pentridge

The Pentridge site was sold by tender last year. Council has retained planning control of the site and has established good working relationships with the developers. Planning for the housing component of the site is well advanced and building has commenced. Jika Jika has now been demolished.

Hoffman Brickworks

The historic Hoffman Brickworks site in Brunswick is about to undergo a major development, with Council having granted planning permits for the first four stages of its development. A feasibility study into uses of the two protected kilns is currently being undertaken and will shortly be completed. Council has continued its productive and constructive engagement with the community in ensuring that this development meets the high expectations the community has for the site.

Republic Campaign

Council, after having conducted a constitutional convention in 1997, gave voice to the outcomes of that convention by advocating a 'Yes' vote at the Republic Referenda. Moreland residents affirmed the position by over 60% supporting a 'Yes' vote, one of Victoria's highest 'Yes' votes.

Oak Park Pool

Infrastructure refurbishment was necessary at the pool with upgrades needed to the boiler and pump systems as well as works to site equipment. This work has now ensured that the operation of the pool can meet resident expectations.

Cultural Exchange Program

One of the highlights of 1999 was the cultural exchange with the desert painters of Central Australia. This resulted in a tour to Moreland of work by the desert painters, which was accompanied by a party of fifteen Aboriginal artists and their families. Moreland Council acquired a number of significant works from this tour, including a fabulous piece of work by renowned Aboriginal artist Turkey Tolson. These works are on permanent public display in the Moreland Civic Centre in Coburg.

Xianyang Visit

Immediate past Mayor, Cr Andrew Rowe, accepted the hospitality offered by the City of Xianyang to visit China last year. The visit strengthened the existing special relationship between the two cities and reaffirmed our mutual commitments to cooperate and further our collective interests in education, culture and economic activity.

Multicultural Policy

Council undertook consultation on multicultural policy following the development of an issues paper, 'Building on Council's Response to Cultural Diversity'. The consultation process sought views, comments and suggestions from community organisations, agencies, service providers and individuals on priorities for Council to consider.

The outcomes of the consultation will greatly assist Council to consolidate and strengthen its response to cultural diversity.

Democracy Project

Council embarked on an ambitious project to measure democracy and community participation in conjunction with Swinburne Institute of Technology and local governments in Tasmania and New South Wales.

Community Grants

Council, in its first budget, doubled community grants to give community groups and organisations far greater capacity to conduct their own activities and events and to foster greater community activity.

Traffic Management

Council doubled the resources allocated to traffic management in 1999/2000, honouring our commitment made in the 1999 Mayor's Speech. A number of traffic management projects are now underway in Brunswick and Coburg in partnership with the local communities.

Council conducted a trial of the innovative Enwitch Traffic Reduction Program with a view to developing new ways to working with the community to deal with persistent traffic problems in local streets.

Council has been successful in advocating for a lower residential speed limit with the decision by the State Government to implement a 50kph speed limit this year. Council has also piloted a 40kph school zone and is currently advocating for its blanket introduction.

Economic Development

Council endorsed its Economic Development Framework which highlights seven strategies aimed at economic sustainability for the City. This document will again be updated in the course of the coming year to reflect the changes in conditions and opportunities which the municipality is experiencing.

Council demonstrated its commitment to regional economic development through its membership in NORTH Link and its active participation in regional projects including business breakfasts, import replacement programs and promotional activities.

Cities for Climate Protection – Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program

Council was one of the first Australian local governments to become a signatory to the program and has already produced an inventory of sources of local greenhouse gas emissions. With this first milestone completed, Council is now focused on meeting the next two CCP milestones – the development of reduction goals for greenhouse gas emissions, and a local action plan to effectively meet these goals.

Detailed Commitments Key Initiatives for 2000–2001

Moonee Ponds Creek

After initiating over one million dollars worth of activity in the quest to revitalise the Moonee Ponds Creek over the past two years, Council reaffirms its commitment to this neglected waterway. We will continue to invest in the revitalisation of the Moonee Ponds Creek and redouble our efforts to attract funds from other spheres of government to this cause.

CityLink

We will continue to monitor traffic movements from the Tollway to better protect local streets. We will consult with our community in detail six months after the opening of the full length of CityLink to determine if traffic management is adequate. We will continue to advocate for changes in tolling as well as improvements in landscaping, noisewall and transparent treatments.

Moreland Leisure Plan

We are embarking on a review of the Leisure Plan with specific focus on the provision of facilities for older adults. Seniors groups play a critical role in our community and Council is committed to better provision of meeting spaces for these groups.

Aquatic and Leisure Centres Plan

Council will undertake research to evaluate the long-term infrastructure needs of Council-owned leisure centres in the City. This research will serve to provide a clear framework that identifies the resources required for these valuable community assets to be maintained in their very best condition for the benefit of residents.

Tennis

We are committed to providing a new tennis facility in Coburg and to the provision of a tennis facility in Brunswick. Work will begin this year on identifying suitable sites and progressing planning for these two sites.

Transport/Traffic

Transport remains a key area of concern for many of our residents. Council recognises the complexity of transport problems facing various parts of the City, particularly north of Bell Street, which is arguably public transport poor.

Council is committed to working to increase the use and availability of public transport throughout the municipality. We will continue the implementation of the Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy, which aims to better integrate the four modes of transport, and to enable greater access to public transport, safer and more comprehensive cycling facilities, and improved pedestrian facilities.

Council will continue to develop and implement a new, innovative framework for working with local communities to help them reclaim their local streets.

We will continue to advocate for the return of conductors to Sydney Road trams. We will actively resist the development of the F2 freeway on our northern boundary.

Reconciliation

Council believes that true and lasting reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians lies at the heart of our national identity. Without this we cannot move forward as a mature and honest nation. Central to this reconciliation is justice for aboriginal people. This is the great, unfinished business of our country.

To facilitate this work, Council will establish a 'Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Working Party'. This working party will guide Council's involvement in the reconciliation debate, placing justice and respect for Aboriginal people at the centre of our involvement. We will seek to provide opportunities for the Moreland community to enter into this undertaking through information and education projects, cultural expression and opportunities for public forums and debate.

Arts Board/Policy/Cultural Development

In line with commitments made in the 1999 Mayor's Speech, Council will shortly establish the Moreland Arts Board. The Board will have advisory responsibility on all aspects of arts policy and programming in the City. It will draw its membership from the arts community and the general Moreland community, and will review and comment on current arts policies, develop new and innovative areas for the arts in Moreland, and will assist in the process of defining Moreland as an 'Arts City'.

Council will develop an arts policy that is separate to the Moreland Leisure Plan to define future expectations in the Arts.

Youth

Council will continue to implement the recommendations of the 1998 and 1999 Youth Summits. Council will create and promote a charter for achieving higher youth employment in Moreland.

Reading Project

Council recognises the significant benefits the Moreland Reading Project has achieved in its short time. The innovative approach the project utilises to engender participation is crucial to furthering a culture in Moreland in which the importance of reading is valued and acknowledged. Council supports examining ways in which the project can be developed beyond its initial twelve-month pilot phase.

Libraries

Construction of the Coburg Library extension is vital to ensuring the proper functioning of the library and that it has the capacity to meet future community demands.

HACC

As a result of Moreland Council's campaign in the area of HACC, the Minister for Aged Care Services will review the funding arrangements, and support is growing among other councils for urgent action on this issue. In 2000, Council will continue to give this issue our highest priority.

Gambling

Council is developing a strategy on responsible gambling which emphasises the need for a more community-oriented approach that seeks to discourage gambling addiction and offer support to those with such a problem.

Pentridge

Council has established a good working relationship with the owners of the Pentridge site. The challenge for 2000 is to ensure that due attention is paid to the heritage and civic precinct aspects of the site. Council will continue to work closely with Grandview Developments to this end.

Brunswick Secondary College – Victoria Street Campus

We will campaign for the former Brunswick Secondary College Campus in Victoria Street to be retained in public hands. We will promote opportunities for this site to support an Economic Development Incubator and community recreational and sporting purposes.

Moreland Energy Foundation (MEF)

In 1999, a business plan and articles of incorporation were prepared for the Moreland Energy Foundation. The formation of the MEF requires a waiver that can only be granted by the Minister for Planning. The formation documents for the MEF have been lodged with the Minister and are awaiting approval. Since Moreland announced its intention to establish a sustainable energy research, development and education foundation, two other cities have followed. The MEF will commence its important groundbreaking role in 2000.

Moreland Affordable Housing Foundation

Council has commissioned research on the most appropriate format for the establishment of an 'Affordable Housing Foundation'. In 2000, this research will be refined and finalised and a Housing Officer who will be responsible for ensuring the start up of the Foundation, recruited. This will enable Council to work with builders and developers, tenants associations and financial institutions to work towards adequate stocks of affordable housing in Moreland. The Foundation will also serve

as a vehicle for introducing sustainable energy principles into lower cost housing.

Xianyang, China

We will continue to nurture our special relationship with Xianyang, China and promote cultural, educational and economic opportunities of mutual benefit.

Sydney Road – Traffic

Following the successful conclusion of negotiations with VicRoads and Swanston Trams, major works will begin in June this year on the Sydney Road Transport Improvement Program.

This will include the selective removal of clearways in Sydney Road, the better synchronisation of signalling on the street, and the enhancement of the street for pedestrian and bicycle use.

Sydney Road – General

Council reaffirms its commitment to Sydney Road as the spine or hub of our City. We will continue to work with traders, businesses, residents and transport authorities to bring real improvements to Sydney Road.

A revamped Sydney Road Committee will provide a forum to enable coordinated planning and development of specific projects for the street. We will continue to support the Sydney Road Street Party, Brunswick and work on the enhancement of key strategic areas in Coburg and Brunswick.

Glenroy Square, Hartington Place

Council is committed to the successful development of these sites in the Glenroy retail area as key community spaces that will strengthen the local amenity.

Fawkner Integrated Facility Development

Council is committed to the Masterplan for the redevelopment of the Fawkner complex as an integrated facility. This commitment includes support for redesign work to the Fawkner Library, leisure centre upgrades, creche, parking and landscaping works, and the addition of a skate park to this important local asset.

Best Value

With the abolition of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, we see real opportunities for better community input into Council's decision-making processes through the State Government's Best Value legislation. We are committed to ensuring that the values, needs and aspirations of the community and its local government are reflected in the ways local government advocates, governs and provides services. We will foster community and cooperative values rather than compulsion and competition.

Review Planning and Building Procedures

Moreland Council received 1171 planning permit applications, 282 applications for plans of subdivision in 1999 and many more building permit applications. The sheer volume of the workload faced by staff in the planning and building area means that they rarely have a chance to review their work. This year a planning and building review will occur with the aim of improving the processes, the working conditions of the staff and communication with the community on planning processes.

Electromagnetic Radiation Policy (EMR)

Throughout 1999, Council expressed its concern about citizens' exposure to potentially high levels of EMR. The Australian and Victorian standard for safe levels exposure is, at 1000 milliGauss, simply too high. Council will adopt a policy of prudent avoidance which will aim to ensure the lowest possible level of EMR throughout the City and will work with business and industry to ensure that equipment and energy sources do not generate high levels of EMR.

Infrastructure

Council will continue to increase funding of the capital budget to deal with the increasing demands of infrastructure renewal. Council will campaign for a fairer distribution of responsibility for roads funding between all spheres of government. Council will advocate for the ability to levy developer contributions to compensate the community for increasing demands upon the community.

Rate Justice

Where privatised infrastructure exists, Council will charge rates on it and defend this right at law. We expect the legal case with cable providers Optus and Telstra to go to court this year. We will defend our rights to rate this infrastructure.

Community Banking

Council will support the proposal for the Community Bank in Brunswick and will work with other local communities if they wish to set up a community bank. Moreland will continue to advocate for better banking services.

Children's Services

Council is committed to the implementation of the children's services strategy and will set up an advisory group this year to monitor and improve on the planning, resourcing and coordination of services for young children.

Employment

Council will demonstrate its practical commitment to supporting employment opportunities for its citizens through a range of projects. These will include an apprenticeship support pilot program which assists young people in upgrading their skills so they can take up available apprenticeship opportunities; increasing the number of traineeship opportunities within Council; and holding a 'Jobs Expo' which brings together employment service providers and their potential clients.

Education

Council will continue to work closely with local schools through regular meetings with principals and through collaborative projects in promotions, publicity and research. The annual Education Expo will again be sponsored by Council to showcase the achievements and offerings of local schools.

Albert Street Park

Council purchased additional land for open space in an area with very poor access to local park land. The second phase of community consultation is currently underway and will be completed by the end of March 2000. The design will be finalised by the end of April in readiness for tendering of construction.

Bus Shelters

Up to 50 new bus shelters will be installed and maintained at no cost to Council over the next five years. The shelters have been specially modified to suit Moreland's needs and will provide safe, clean, comfortable accommodation for public transport users.

Moreland is developing an associated information and signage package for each shelter, which will make it easier for users to locate facilities nearby and to access the entire public transport network.

Budget Policy

Moreland remains committed to prudent and responsible financial management. Council recognises that public services and assets are best protected and enhanced by careful financial management and responsible use of resources in the community interest.

Council is committed to balanced budgets and to not borrowing to fund the operational budget. Projects funded through the Moreland budget must be justified through clear policy and strategy, and be consistent with the Mayor's Speech and the five key commitments of Council.

We will completely review our financial strategy including investment strategy this year.

East Timor

Moreland City Council has committed itself to assisting in the rebuilding of East Timor which was devastated by the fighting following the Referendum for Independence in August last year. East Timor is struggling to restore peace and democracy in this, the 'Year of the Emergency'. Moreland is working with the community to assist in very practical terms such as the shipment of bicycles and tools for use in East Timor.

Xanana Gusmao will deliver the Blackburn Oration this May in Moreland.

Conclusion

What has been presented in this document will become Council policy alongside the 1999 Mayor's Speech, 'Fostering Democracy and Building Community'. Council invites you to judge the Council against these plans in twelve months' time. The year 2001 Mayor's Speech will be the second iteration of the initial 1999 plan and will outline a further twelve-month program for Council.

The 2001 Mayor's Speech will identify progress in meeting the objectives contained within this statement and take us forward to an election for the third democratically elected Moreland City Council.

Councillors – Elected March 1999 for three years



Grandview Ward

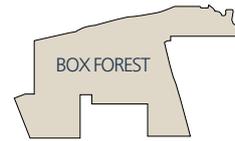


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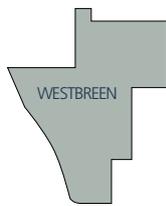


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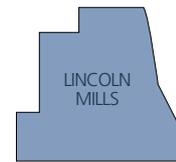


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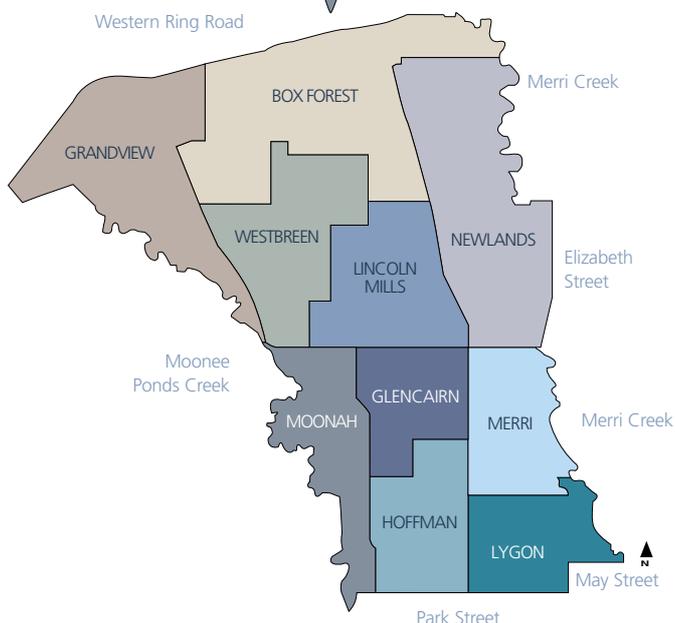


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Mayor's Speech 2000

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April 2000

