



## MINUTE OF THE MAYOR

Dated: 29 October, 2018

### RE: Ian Kiernan OAM AO

It is hardly surprising that you can see Sydney Harbour from Ian Kiernan's Kirribilli terrace. The place was his passion - as a local resident, as a yachtsman and, of course, as the man who began an international, community-based, environmental movement on the shores of that same waterway.

When the precipitous stone steps to *Amy Terrace* were laid in the 1880s, Sydney Harbour was already a busy polluted port. Poverty then was such that much of what was washed up was salvaged and recycled. A century later, in 1989, Ian Kiernan was photographed on the foreshore of Balls Head Bay, Wollstonecraft, surrounded by plastic bottles amid the drift wood. This is the year he established 'Clean Up Sydney Harbour' when recycling had become a casualty of history: the waterway a receptacle for the affluent, throw-away society, along with the pollution that came with a working waterfront. Ian's genius lay in his ability to marshal thousands to clamber around rocks and squelch through mangroves collecting bottles, bags, nappies, tyres, shopping trolleys and the occasional motor-car.

Ian Kiernan was moved to organise his Harbour clean-up after a round-the-world yacht race which made clear the horror of plastic pollution. He saw an international problem, started local and then went global. 'Clean Up Australia' followed the Sydney Harbour effort in 1990. 'Clean Up the World' was begun three years later.

The statistics reveal the magnitude of his achievement: more than 40,000 volunteers in 1989, 30 million volunteers from over 80 countries after 1993. The amount of rubbish removed is probably incalculable. For that, and raising the public's environment consciousness, Ian's name can be considered next to Milo Dunphy and Bob Brown in the history of this country's conservation movement.

Although Phillip Adams famously dubbed him 'the greatest garbo since Greta', Ian Kiernan's interests went much further than rubbish collection. He was involved in sewage treatment technology, he was chairman of the Sydney Olympics 2000 Bid Community Relations Committee and a member of its Environment Committee. He was Patron of Friends of Sydney Harbour. In his last months, Ian defended the place of small harbour-based clubs, such as Mosman Rowers, under pressure from rising fees: 'We might as well put signs on all waterfront clubs to say "going to the highest bidder at end of lease".'

Ian Kiernan's contribution was appropriately recognised by his country. He was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 1991, named Australian of the Year in 1994, and made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1995. Ian's international contribution was

also acknowledged by the United Nations in 1998 when he was awarded the Sasakawa Environment prize for ‘mobilising tens of millions of people around the globe’.

Ian Kiernan passed away from cancer on 16 October 2018. The waters of Sydney Harbour are cleaner than when he started in 1989, partly because industry has largely left. While the tide of plastic seems never-ending our foreshores are undoubtedly better for his efforts. Perhaps as important, however, is the inspiration his life still gives us. This year Council is proud to partner with Clean Up Australia and Willoughby schoolgirl Sophia Skarparis in her ‘Bye-Bye Plastic’ initiative. It was wonderful that Ian could give his support to that cause and express his delight in ‘passing the baton to the next generation’.

**I therefore recommend:**

**1. THAT** that Council support the Mayor visiting Judy Kiernan to convey Council’s condolences.

**COUNCILLOR JILLY GIBSON  
MAYOR**