



MINUTE OF THE MAYOR

Dated: 19 November 2018

RE: Vale Ted Mack

No one in recent times had affected the spirit and face of North Sydney more than Ted Mack. He represented this area at all three levels of government - local, state and federal. He is, in fact, the only Australian to have completed this trifecta as an Independent. For that Ted was called the 'father of the Independents'. His commitment to participatory, open government and his unimpeachable defence of ethics laid the foundation for a truly deep admiration and affection among North Sydney residents.

During his time on Council Ted worked to improve the area's affordable housing stock, refurbish the main oval at St Leonards Park, finalise Civic Park, and improve Stanton Library. He designed a set of bus shelters that still characterise the local streetscape. Two major heritage reviews established an extensive list of protected buildings and the notion of conservation heritage areas. There was much more.

Ted's first encounter with North Sydney Council was triggered by the rapid approval of three high-rise buildings around the house he had lived in with his family since 1966. He was a qualified and experienced architect and had only moved to this area because it was still more affordable than Paddington where he had been born in 1933 and which was one of the first of Sydney's suburbs to experience gentrification. The approvals affecting Ted's two storey semis in Neutral Bay were evidence of a Council and planning outlook that had little regard for community notification, let alone consultation. But in fact, the provocation of Ted Mack, private citizen and professional architect, was an example of an old way of operating already under review. At the end of 1970, the locally-based architectural firm Ancher, Mortlock and Murray was engaged to formulate new planning strategies that included participatory planning. The creation of resident-based precinct committees was part of that reform. The timing was perfect and Ted Mack duly got involved in his local Neutral Bay precinct.

By 1973 Mack had formulated a set of ideas about planning. In an article titled 'Nuremburg Shazam or Development Controls', published in *Architecture in Australia* in June 1973, Ted rejected the notion of expert centralised planning and laid out a case for bottom up democratic planning with an opening nod to Jane Jacobs' critique of 'the Pseudo Science of City Planning' in her 1961 classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Single use zoning, he suggested, confers 'the order of the cemetery' on a place by destroying its diversity. Aesthetic control, he continued, 'would be ludicrous if it did not contain overtones of irrationality and fascist elitism'. In fact, 'ghastly good taste' arbitrated by censorial experts ran counter to the 'qualities of spontaneity, variety and... excellence'.

Ted's concept of good planning depended upon the 'widest possible public participation'. Its 'values and goals' should be 'derived from the people it purports to serve'. Planning should be flexible and reflexive. The task for authorities, therefore, was to establish the 'complex social mechanism necessary to achieve this'. The seeds of Ted's championing of open government and a more consequential precinct system can be detected in these missives. He would later look to the Swiss system of popular referenda as the ideal system of government.

The following year Ted was invited to run for Council by Robyn Read who herself had been motivated to stand in 1970 by anger at ‘middle-aged men making the most appalling decisions’ that affected other people’s lives. Read was a young university educated woman, part of the wider resident action phenomenon and typical of many in that movement.

She had been a minority voice in 1970 but by 1974, Ted recalled a council that was shifting; ‘representing the left to the right of the political spectrum’. This was a ‘new breed’. Architect and local resident Judith Ambler had joined Read as part of the group who supported organic low-rise development. The population of the area was also changing with young professionals such as Read and Mack becoming an important constituency. In 1979 Chris Johnson, future Government Architect, helped to establish the local newspaper, the *North Sydney Post*, to report on development issues. In 1980 the *Post* called for a ‘clean sweep’ of Council in the upcoming local government election and endorsed Ted Mack for Kirribilli Ward.

The 1980 election was extraordinary. Ninety-two candidates ran for 15 positions and only 5 sitting councillors were returned. Ted Mack was one of those and he became Mayor.

The changes over the following decade are a testimony to Mack’s belief in direct democracy and responsive, rational and open government:

- In 1980 a revitalised precinct system was introduced which gave residents greater input into development in their area; ‘to be part of the actual decision making process of Council, not just consultative bodies’.
- Mayoral Mercedes is sold and funds put into community bus fleet.
- In 1981 North Sydney Council was the first Council in the State to commission a Heritage Study. The Latona Masterman report laid the groundwork for a more comprehensive study in 1993 and the establishment of Heritage Conservation Areas.
- In 1982 Civic Park opened after defeat of high-rise Civic development proposal.
- In 1983 popular Mayoral elections were introduced.
- In 1987 St Leonards Oval is extensively refurbished by North Sydney Council.
- In 1988 the office block is completed behind Stanton Library - adds to Council’s property portfolio and income stream which was an important part of Mack’s vision of an independent self-sufficient Council.
- In 1989 Local Environment Plan gazetted after remaining in draft form for eight years.

Ted Mack’s time as North Sydney Mayor coincided in large part with his career in New South Wales parliament 1981-1988. He believed that the former was assisted by the latter. In 1991, after being elected to the Federal seat of North Sydney, he helped establish the ‘North Sydney Independent Movement’. In a letter of invitation to residents he noted that ‘over the last fifteen years or so, a set of values and aspirations has developed in the North Sydney area which could loosely be described as the Independent movement’.

Ted Mack stayed interested in the politics of the local area to the end. Immediately following the Local Government Elections in 2017, Ted contacted the newly elected Kathy Brodie and invited her to his home for a cup of tea and a chat. When he passed away after a stroke on 6 November 2018, North Sydney lost an eloquent and passionate advocate and defender.

I therefore recommend:

1. THAT following the recommendation from the Council Meeting on 25 June 2018 regarding the proposal to rename the site currently referred to as “North Sydney Civic Centre Park” to “Ted Mack Civic Park”, steps be taken to fast-track the renaming and a community event be held to recognise the occasion.

**COUNCILLOR JILLY GIBSON
MAYOR**