

Resolution of Council

17 February 2025

Item 13.2

Vale Rosemary Wright

Moved by Councillor Worling, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) on 7 December 2024, Rosemary Wright, a prominent and colourful member of the Surry Hills community, sadly passed away at age 81. She is survived by her partner, David Wyatt, and daughter, Jess Chamberlain;
- (ii) Rosemary was born in Adelaide on 6 April 1943, with her family moving to Sydney shortly after her birth, settling in Manning Road, Double Bay;
- (iii) she attended SCEGGS Darlinghurst, and from a young age, was defiant of the gender expectations of her time;
- (iv) upon leaving school, Rosemary threw herself into a variety of entrepreneurial ventures. In the late 1960s, she launched her own beauty product line, taking to live infomercials to promote her business. She pointedly employed an all-women team to help promote her company across NSW and the ACT;
- (v) in the late 1970s, after selling her beauty business, Rosemary embarked on a new venture - a denim stone-washing factory in Marrickville. Little did she know that this would lead her to become the creator of the last textile dyeing hub in Australia;
- (vi) as she built her stone-washing empire, through the roller door of her Marrickville factory, one simple request changed everything: a customer asked if she could dye fabric to a specific colour. Agreeing to the challenge, word quickly spread, and soon customers were coming to have their jeans, shirts, and even homewares dyed in unique, vibrant colours;

- (vii) around 1988, Rosemary decided to set up a more professional shopfront at her terrace house in Riley Street, Surry Hills. She successfully applied to the Council for dual commercial and residential approval, marking the humble beginnings of CullaChange;
 - (viii) over 35 years later, and four different shopfronts in Surry Hills, CullaChange is not only a beloved Surry Hills stalwart, but the only remaining retail dyehouse in Australia. Through it all, Rosemary was the heartbeat of the business;
 - (ix) Rosemary's influence and warmth extended far beyond the walls of CullaChange. In the early 1980s, she helped her neighbours dress for their first Mardi Gras, and over the years, she opened her home to many international female students, helping them navigate the complexities of setting up their own bank accounts and finding work;
 - (x) she supported elderly neighbours who didn't have local family, inviting them to lunch and dinners and checking on their well-being often, and fought tirelessly for the businesses on Devonshire Street during Covid-19 and the light-rail construction; and
 - (xi) Rosemary was a local powerhouse, treasured by countless people in the community for her remarkable tenacity, zest for life and love of colour. Her loss is felt deeply by all who knew her;
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to Rosemary Wright's family expressing Council's condolences; and
- (C) all present in the meeting observe a minute's silence to commemorate the life of Rosemary Wright and her contribution to the Surry Hills community.

Carried unanimously.

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Note – All Councillors, staff and members of the public present stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect to Rosemary Wright.