

Resolution of Council

22 September 2025

Item 13.1

Vale Dr Hannah Middleton

Moved by Councillor Ellsmore, seconded by Councillor Thompson –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the passing of Dr Hannah Middleton on 12 June 2025, a lifelong community activist and communist, who made a significant contribution to nuclear disarmament and anti-war campaigns both in Australia and internationally, to the Glebe community, and to the protection of public housing. Hannah was the beloved wife of Denis Doherty, a fellow staunch community activist and communist;
- (ii) Hannah was born in Preston, England on 25 October 1942, and grew up in the surroundings of London amidst the aftermath of World War II;
- (iii) she first became involved in anti-war campaigning at the age of 8 or 9, where she collected signatures for the Stockholm Peace appeal alongside her mother. At age 16, she was arrested for participating in the 'Committee of 100' civil disobedience campaigns;
- (iv) in 1964, Hannah graduated from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London with a Bachelor of Arts and Honours in African Studies. From 1968 she studied as a postgraduate in social anthropology at the Humboldt University, Berlin (then part of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)), while working as a lecturer in English language;
- (v) in 1970, Hannah moved to Australia and lived alongside the Gurindji people of the Northern Territory to conduct fieldwork for her doctoral thesis on Aboriginal land rights. She permanently emigrated to Australia in 1974. In 1977 she published a seminal book on land rights called "And now we want our land back: A history of Australian Aboriginal People";

- (vi) Hannah was a lecturer in anthropology at the University of New South Wales until 1980. She left to work full time for the Communist Party of Australia (then called the Socialist Party of Australia). She was the editor of the party's newspaper the Guardian, the first woman President of the party, and the first woman General Secretary of the party;
- (vii) in 1986, Hannah became a founding member of the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition (AABCC) and was its national spokesperson from 1988. The AABCC is a national coalition of Australian organisations that campaigns against foreign military installations on Australian soil;
- (viii) Hannah was involved in many other anti-militarism and Indigenous rights campaigns and organisations throughout her life, including but not limited to:
 - (a) Hannah was a founding member and full-time worker for the Bring the Frigates Home Coalition in 1991, a campaign against the Gulf War and US sanctions on, and against the invasion in Iraq;
 - (b) Hannah was the Convenor of the 'Blue Paper Project' - an initiative that represents over 60 peace, environmental, religious, trade union and women's groups from across Australia which works to inform and stimulate community discussion about national security and foreign policy;
 - (c) Hannah campaigned against the Australia International Defence Exhibition (AIDEX). She was arrested in 1991, when up to 2,000 protesters blockaded the National Exhibition Centre in Canberra with the goal of shutting down the AIDEX, and then also at a protest in Adelaide;
 - (d) Hannah was again arrested in 1996 for occupying Prime Minister Keating's office in support of East Timorese independence;
 - (e) Hannah was active in the formation of the International Network against Foreign Military Bases and in 2007 organised for activists from Hawaii to come to Australia for the Talisman Sabre war games protests; and
 - (f) in 2008 Hannah and Denis were awarded the Quakers' Donald Groom Fellowship for her submission to bring 2 indigenous Chamoru from Guam to Australia for a speaking tour;
- (ix) Hannah was the Executive Officer of the University of Sydney's 'Sydney Peace Foundation' from 2006 to 2012. In 2006, Hannah and Denis received the inaugural community peace award from the foundation;
- (x) Hannah lived in Glebe with Denis, first moving to the suburb in 1974. She was a founding member of both Hands off Glebe and Action for Public Housing. With Denis, Hannah coordinated the Glebe Grapevine, a free community newsletter which updates residents on important news especially around the protection of public housing;
- (xi) Hannah played a key role in the campaign to save the Glebe Youth Service in 2013-2014. One of the actions she coordinated was a daily stall outside the centre, where people could sign protest Christmas postcards to the former Minister Pru Goward. Hannah diligently sent off bundles of signed cards in the post every day, and by February 2014 the community had won a commitment the service would be reopened;

- (xii) Hannah worked tirelessly to protect public housing, including the successful campaign to save the Franklyn Street Estate from redevelopment, stopping the sell off of local public housing terraces, and for improved maintenance and rights for tenants; and
- (xiii) in 2022 Hannah was awarded Balmain 'Woman of the Year';
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to Hannah's family expressing Council's condolences; and
- (C) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate Hannah's life.

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 Dr Hannah Middleton.