

Resolution of Council

23 February 2026

Item 3.1

Vale Dame Marie Roslyn Bashir

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

We were all saddened to learn of the death of Dame Marie Roslyn Bashir, 37th Governor of New South Wales, on 20 January 2026. In the days that followed, numerous tributes provided details of her extraordinary life, career and service to the Australian community.

Dame Marie was born in Narrandera, New South Wales on 1 December 1930 to Lebanese Christian parents, Michael Bashir and Victoria Melick. On completing her secondary schooling at Sydney Girls High School in 1947, she studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, becoming a proficient violinist.

Her future however was in medicine, rather than music. Her father and her paternal uncle were both medical graduates from the American University of Beirut. In 1956, she completed the dual degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at the University of Sydney.

While at university, she met Nicholas Shehadie, then a rising rugby player and they married on 23 February 1957. After their marriage, Dame Marie continued with her medical career, and eventually taking postgraduate studies in psychiatry. Nicholas meanwhile established a successful business, and was elected to the then Sydney City Council in 1962 as a Civic Reform Alderman. In 1973, he became Lord Mayor of Sydney, which meant that Dame Marie became Lady Mayoress. In 1976, when Nicholas was knighted, she acquired the courtesy title "Lady Shehadie", but chose not to use it, instead retaining her own name.

During this period Dame Marie established her own significant career in psychiatry, initially working in adolescent mental health. In 1993, she was appointed Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney and as the Clinical Director of Mental Health Services for the Central Sydney Area Health Service the following year.

During her time at the Central Sydney Area Health, Dame Marie worked with the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern, to establish the Aboriginal Mental Health Unit and taking on the consultative role of senior psychiatrist.

She remained with the Health Service for around 7 years, when then Premier Bob Carr invited her to become Governor of New South Wales. She was sworn in on 1 March 2001. The appointment was warmly welcomed by all sides of politics, with a Sydney Morning Herald editorial describing it as "an inspired choice", while noting that she would be "a powerful advocate for the powerless".

From the beginning, Dame Marie revealed that she would be a very different Governor. On the day of her swearing in, she agreed to become Patron of the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service and in 2005 opened the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival. She launched a health initiative to support Indigenous medicine and nursing students as well as supporting the progress of reconciliation. In 2002, Marie Bashir became patron of the Australia-Vietnam Medical Trust and became intimately involved in collaborative health programs in Vietnam, particularly in rural areas. From 2007 to 2011, she served as Chancellor of the University of Sydney.

Dame Marie was Governor when I was elected Lord Mayor in 2004. Over the years that followed we shared the stage on countless civic occasions, from Sydney Festival events to Anzac Day commemorations.

For many years after the Dawn Service we would take to the balcony of Town Hall and quietly watch the Diggers pass by along the parade route. These moments captured Marie perfectly: respectful, attentive, deeply humane. Her presence at Coloured Diggers marches in Redfern Park gave that remembrance long-overdue official recognition, setting a powerful precedent for those who followed.

In 2011, her term was extended until 2014. As her term as Governor came to an end, numerous tribute events were held to honour her service. They included a reception I hosted at Sydney Town Hall. At this reception, Sir Nicholas was asked if he was looking forward to Dame Marie's retirement. He replied: "She's not going to retire. She's going back to psychiatry." This she did, working pro bono with young veterans suffering untreated posttraumatic stress disorder.

Dame Marie received many honours throughout her life. She was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1988, a Companion of the Order in 2001 and a Dame of the Order in 2014. She received Honorary Doctorate degrees from several universities. Several Institutions and buildings are named after her, including a school in Strathfield, a sports centre in Mosman and the Professor Marie Bashir Centre at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. All are well deserved.

Dame Marie was a woman of extraordinary grace, wisdom and compassion. She brought her experience as a celebrated psychiatrist and advocate for mental health, together with her trademark warmth, empathy and modesty, to the role of Governor.

When she spoke, people listened, and New South Wales is richer for her life and legacy.

THE RT HON CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor of Sydney

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor), seconded by Councillor Kok –

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Dame Marie Roslyn Bashir and her significant contribution to the community of New South Wales and to improving mental health;
- (B) Council expresses its condolences to Dame Marie's family and friends; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to Dame Marie's family to convey Council's condolences.

Carried unanimously.

S051491

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