Item 3.1

Vale Robin Lawrence OAM

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I note with sadness the recent passing of Robin Lawrence OAM, a distinguished artist, teacher and community leader whose lifelong dedication to the arts enriched the cultural life of Glebe, Sydney and communities around the world.

Born in Sydney in 1935, Robin studied painting at the National Art School, graduating with a Diploma in Art in 1956. Her artistic journey would take her across the globe, including to London, New Zealand, Florence, Salzburg and New York, where she spent more than 2 decades teaching, painting and exhibiting. During this time, she served as Head of Art at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York and continued to develop a deeply personal artistic practice that evolved throughout her life.

Returning to Sydney in 1986, Robin made her home in Glebe, where she became a central figure in the local arts community. A gifted painter and thoughtful observer of everyday life, she was particularly known for her portraiture. Her work was recognised through selection as a finalist in the Archibald Prize in 2000 and the Portia Geach Memorial Award in 1992, 1996 and 2005. In later years, she became known for her subtle still-life paintings, which she exhibited at Stanley Street Gallery in Darlinghurst, continuing to demonstrate her sensitivity to light, colour and form.

While Robin's artistic achievements were considerable, her greatest legacy may be the opportunities she created for others. In the mid-1990s, she worked alongside fellow artist James Barker to organise an art exhibition that formed part of a community fundraising campaign to support the establishment of the Glebe Library at Benledi. The success of that exhibition inspired the creation of an annual art show and, with the support of the Glebe Chamber of Commerce and local government, the first Glebe Art Show was held in 1997.

Robin became the founding coordinator and driving force behind the Glebe Art Show, guiding its growth for 15 years before stepping down in 2013. Under her leadership, the show developed from a modest local exhibition into one of Sydney's most successful and enduring community arts events. Her commitment to maintaining an inclusive, non-selective exhibition created opportunities for emerging artists to exhibit alongside established practitioners and helped foster a thriving artistic community in Sydney's inner city.

Nearly 3 decades later, the Glebe Art Show remains one of Robin's most enduring gifts to the community. Showcasing the work of hundreds of artists and supported by volunteers, local businesses and councils, its continuing success stands as a testament to her vision, determination and belief that art should be accessible to everyone. In recognition of her foundational role, the Glebe Art Society renamed its Open Art Prize as the Robin Lawrence Open Art Prize in 2025, ensuring her contribution will be remembered by future generations of artists.

Robin's service to the arts was formally recognised in 2010 when she was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her contribution as an artist and for establishing the Glebe Art Prize. Yet those who knew her remember not only her artistic achievements, but also her generosity, encouragement and the community spirit she brought to everything she did.

Robin Lawrence leaves behind an enduring artistic legacy and a stronger, more connected community because of her profound dedication to the arts. She will be remembered with deep respect, gratitude and affection.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

(A) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Robin Lawrence and her significant contribution to arts, teaching and the cultural life of Glebe and the wider Sydney community

(B) Council express its condolences to Robins's son, Adrian and her many friends, fellow artists, students and all those whose lives were touched by her remarkable talent and generosity

(C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to Robin Lawrence's family to convey Council's condolences.

THE RT. HON. CLOVER MOORE AO HON. FRAIA

Lord Mayor of Sydney