

Item 3.2

Vale Vaughan Hinton OAM

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I inform Council about the death of William Vaughan Hinton, journalist, broadcaster, television producer and proud '78er, on 29 August 2024.

Vaughan was born in Toowoomba on 17 January 1933, and as a child he wanted to be a broadcaster, taking his first steps towards this ambition with a 13-year stint as a journalist on the Toowoomba Chronicle.

Reviewing a book by another journalist about refugees in Europe changed his life. Long after World War II had ended, refugees were still living in camps waiting to secure entry visas into safer countries. Vaughan wanted to help them. The opportunity came in 1963, when he joined the World Council of Churches in Australia (now the Australian Council of Churches) as Information Officer in its Resettlement Department working on refugee issues.

He continued to work with overseas aid programs, often travelling to refugee centres and war zones until he joined the ABC as a broadcast officer with ABC Radio in 1977.

Vaughan had married Elizabeth in 1958, and they had two daughters, Nicola and Caroline. Taking the World Council of Churches job meant uprooting his family and moving to Sydney. During the 1970s, Vaughan increasingly came to terms with being gay and came out to his wife. They eventually negotiated a separation, with Vaughan was still devoted to his family. Vaughan became active in gay groups and took part in the first Mardi Gras in 1978. The following year he met Kym Skinner, who became his life partner. Around 25 years later, when Elizabeth was terminally ill, Vaughan and Kym, a trained nurse, opened their home to Elizabeth, and nursed her until her death.

When Vaughan joined the ABC he worked with the community affairs program, Broadband, as a religious features producer and later as a radio documentary producer. He also worked in television, most notably as interviewer for a 10-part series of extended interviews, "Man in Question". A short break from the ABC followed in 1980, when he was appointed national co-ordinator of the community mental health organisation, GROW.

He rejoined the ABC in 1984 as a TV producer, with his documentary "Prisoners of Hope" winning the UN Media Peace Prize for that year. This was followed by "Return of the Pink Triangle" about gays and the Christian church which also won a best documentary award.

In 1986, he was appointed as Executive Producer with responsibility for all TV religious programs, all Aboriginal programs and coverage of related events of national importance. He recruited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander producers and researchers who would be able to make their own programs.

“The First Australians”, showing Aboriginal-made documentaries, and “Blackout”, a series featuring Aboriginal and Islander performers and stories on indigenous social affairs resulted. “Blackout” episodes won major media awards. In 1988, he produced “One People Sing Freedom”, which explored the Aboriginal response to the bicentenary. In the same year he launched “Compass”, which is now a Sunday evening TV fixture with its exploration of religion and spirituality in Australia.

As special events producer, every year Vaughan would propose telecasting the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. Finally, in 1993 his bosses agreed. He was the ideal person to produce it, given his experience with the annual Anzac Day parades and many other events. The one hour telecast went to air on the Sunday evening following the 1994 Parade, against a background of strong political and community controversy. It reached an audience of 2.5 million, the ABC's largest audience for a single program.

Vaughan retired from the ABC, and together with Kym, moved to Monbulk in Victoria, where he could be close to his daughters and grandchildren. They volunteered for the local fire brigade while Vaughan continued to undertake management assignments for the ABC until 2003. In 2004, he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the media through television production, and to the community of Monbulk.

In his unpublished memoir, Vaughan wrote that his life has been defined by walking through doors which did not reveal what was behind them. What has been revealed about us as Australians through his many programs is his legacy.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Vaughan Hinton and his contribution to broadcasting and television in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander film making, the LGBTIQ+ community and humanitarian causes;
- (B) Council express its condolences to Vaughan's partner, Kym Skinner, his daughters Nicola and Caroline and their families, and his many friends and former colleagues; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to convey Council's condolences to Vaughan's partner, Kym Skinner, his daughters Nicola and Caroline and their families.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor