

4. MAYORAL MINUTE

Macarthur Combined Churches Christmas Dinner

On Christmas Day 2011 Councillor Hawker and I had the privilege of assisting as volunteers at the Annual Christmas Dinner hosted by representatives of the Macarthur Combined Churches and an army of dedicated volunteers.

The Annual Christmas Dinner, held in Council's Civic Hall, was first organised over 23 years ago by a group of local people. The group, representing many denominations, responded to the growing needs of a large section of our community. With many new residents living far away from family and friends, the initiative was seen as an opportunity to bring people together and give them the chance to make friends and share in the Christmas spirit.

In the early years volunteers knocked on doors seeking support in cash or kind as well as organising fundraising events to ensure that resources were available to enable them to present a free Christmas dinner to over 500 local residents.

The current committee members are John Harding (President), Joan Harding (Secretary), Mary Whitfield (Treasurer), Susanna and Kevin Edward, Ann and Ray Peters, Glenda McKenzie, Karen Dimmock, Stan Whitfield, Drina Ng, Barbara Hedges, Raelene Holmes and Elaine and Rick Lee.

With a number of local organisations now offering a similar service the number of attendees at the annual dinner now averages between 300-400. Attendees include young families, the frail and aged and more recently a number of people with health challenges are able to share in the hospitality.

The event generates great excitement among the attendees with a coming together of many nationalities and religions in the spirit of Christmas. There are no criteria to be involved, no group specifically targeted - everyone is welcome with open arms. Guests are provided with a morning tea, entertainment and a full Christmas dinner including Christmas pudding. After lunch Santa visits and distributes gifts that have been donated by various churches and other organisations. As in previous years there was an abundance of food donated allowing the volunteers to package 300 takeaway containers to be distributed to guests.

The success of the event is due to the wonderful support the organising group receives from local businesses. Council provides considerable in kind support including proceeds from the Mayor's Christmas appeal, the Campbelltown Catholic Club makes a generous annual donation and many local businesses support the event. The organising committee also expend in excess of \$3,500 from their own resources.

An event such as this could not be provided without the selfless dedication of the 40-50 volunteers that give up most of their Christmas day to bring joy to the less fortunate. The volunteers come from all walks of life and undertake roles such as event coordinators, bus drivers, fundraisers, kitchen hands and cleaners. Most importantly the volunteers show that they care.

To acknowledge this hard work and to personally thank everyone involved in the Macarthur Combined Churches Christmas Dinner Appeal I intend to host a civic reception on Thursday 16 February 2012 and I invite all Councillors to attend.

Recommendation

That a copy of this Mayoral Minute together with a letter of thanks be forwarded to the Macarthur Combined Churches Christmas Day Dinner organising committee.

Council Meeting 14 February 2012 (Glynn/Rule)

That the Recommendation be adopted.

Council Resolution Minute Number 3

That the Recommendation be adopted.