

Friends of Marian St Theatre,

I assume that, if you are here today, you (like my colleagues and myself from the Save Marian St Theatre Committee) have come because you greatly value this historic local theatre which, sadly, has been closed for far too long--and you, like us, are eager to see it renovated and re-opened, with even better access, facilities and options for a variety of high quality performances than was possible in its previous, greatly appreciated, active life.

I share your optimism. It's a very real likelihood that this is going to happen, because of the passionate community support for this much-loved theatre.

As Chair of the Save Marian Street Theatre initiative, I would like to thank Ku-ring-gai Council for this opportunity to be a part of today's event in the Park, which was suggested by Save Marian St Theatre, but (we acknowledge) has been organised and managed by the Council, in the effort to see MST re-modelled and opened again as an exciting new community performance venue.

My theme today has three major elements. One is the passion and generosity of community contributions and commitment that initially opened up this lovely Park and, more recently, fought for the re-opening of our beloved theatre; and another is the notion of milestones, to make sure that the likelihood of a re-opened Marian Street Theatre, better even than before, can happen as quickly, as purposefully, and as exceptionally well-executed as possible.

The third element or theme combines the Theatre with this Park—Selkirk Park--a beautiful euclypted open community park facility, made possible by an exceptionally generous gesture by a local resident, Henry Selkirk, for community use.

Henry Selkirk, who lived in 10 Culworth Ave, divided his property in half, so that this northern section could be used for community purposes; and a week after he died, it was transferred to the Council, to be maintained as the community park it is today.

Local community leaders have always exhibited this voluntary generosity to enhance Ku-ring-gai, and the benefits it provides to those who have the good fortune to reside here. The list of community philanthropy is a lengthy one, and their efforts are long-lasting. Other examples here in Killara are Swain's Gardens, given by Arthur (Mick) Swain, and the bowling and tennis clubs in Arnold Street, established through community leaders.

Marian Street Theatre itself came into existence through the work of community leaders coming together, as long ago as 1904, determining that a community hall was needed. Today the community contribution to our local area is vitally important in helping to provide the facilities and activities we all enjoy so much. This point was made very clear in 2016, when the then Mayor of Ku-ring-gai, Cheryl Szatow—and thank you for your welcome this morning, Cheryl--approached four of us as local residents, and suggested that, if we wanted to see MST open again, the community's enthusiasm for it needed to be engaged and very evident. The community was a vital element, without which MST would have been a lost cause.

Out of Cheryl's suggestion was born the Save Marian Street Theatre initiative. A committee of very diverse and talented locals was formed, and started engaging the community, through a number of activities including our monthly Soirees, sharing information about progress, and providing 'a taste of what's to come'.

With the support of Council, we conducted a feasibility study to gauge community expectations and support.

Local architect Luke Playoust proposed that the re-opened Marion St Theatre be re-conceptualised with the distinctive and compelling theme of 'A Theatre in a Park'; and we developed a Business Plan, including Luke's concept, which became the catalyst for Councillors to approve future funding for the re-modelling and running of MST Theatre—thus achieving our first milestone. That

happened, in part, because over 3000 residents signed up to lend their support. A significant number turned up in the Council meeting, wearing red 'Save Marian St Theatre' tops, to join us in achieving that vital—and, as it proved—unanimous Council decision to re-open Marian St Theatre. Today we mark another milestone in the journey, as we explore the draft plans for the theatre, as prepared by architects in the well-known firm of Tonkin, Zulaika and Greer—designs which, we're delighted to see, do indeed bring the Theatre and Selkirk Park together. This event provides an opportunity for the community to offer input and feedback on the exciting proposals for the theatre. We have at least two more milestones to achieve, firstly the renovations commencing; and finally the curtain being raised again in our beloved Marian Street Theatre.

But before the curtain goes up, maybe there's yet another milestone still to come—and it's one that the Save Marian Street Theatre Committee has firmly in its sights. Our Theatre already has exceptional accessibility, compared with most other theatres, in its close proximity to Killara Station and the commuter car park—but we also urge our local NSW Members of Parliament to join us in pressing for Killara Station to be equipped with a long-awaited lift, by the time Marian Street Theatre opens its doors to an eager public from Ku-ring-ai---and well beyond.

I think we can be pretty confident of healthy audience numbers. John Krummel, the long-serving and certainly the most successful Artistic Director of Marian Street Theatre, used to make the proud claim that MST had the second highest subscription rate in the country. Indeed I imagine there are people here today who were subscribers back in those days.

As long as we, our local community, remain engaged and committed, we can achieve an enhanced facility that will involve and entertain us for generations to come, with theatre, music and so much more, ensuring that Ku-ring-gai and its residents, including current and future children, continue to grow as a diverse community of creative excellence. Please join us in making sure that we make this happen—not just for us here today, but for generations to come.

Thank you so much for your ongoing and transformative support.