



MOUNT LAWLEY SOCIETY

Life Membership Award AGM 4 December 2017

Rod Willox AM

Rod Willox and his wife Lyn have lived in Dene Street, Mount Lawley since 1972, raising 4 children.

Rod worked in pathology and is a decorated Reserve forces soldier obtaining the rank of Colonel. He is also Member of the Order of Australia.

In his front garden in 1993, looking forward no doubt to his retirement years ahead, Rod, already an active participant in the Community, much like many of our Members tonight, was asked if he would like to run for Council in the Lawley Ward following the retirement of Jim McNamara.

Successfully elected, it did not take Rod long to learn that demolition and development was still very much a concern in the Lawley Ward, not from the risk of high rise but from infill 'grouped dwellings' that were in stark contrast to the Federation character of large parts of Mount Lawley.

In the mid 1990s the Society organised a tram ride, led by our current Patron Barrie Baker, which included local Councillors, State Members of Parliament and the Minister for Planning, Mr Richard Lewis. The Society was concerned about demolition and infill, finding that the single dwelling covenant on the title was of little impediment.

Barrie Baker recalls Mr Lewis making the very clear point to the Society and Councillors that the single dwelling covenants can be overturned by the higher densities in force and if the community wanted to stem the tide of demolitions then it needed to lower its zonings.

Rod and his co-ward Councillor at the time, Cr Trevor Clarey, worked hard to ensure an ultimate reduction in densities across Coolbinia, Menora and Mount Lawley. Rod recalls this caused some flack but true to his military background, withstood the opposition in favour of the greater good. This reduction in zoning must rate very highly as one of the Society's most significant achievements. Had the zonings not changed at that time then the streetscape today of our side residential streets would look very different.

Rod was a strong supporter of the million dollar refurbishment of our venue tonight, the graceful art deco designed Mount Lawley Bowling Club, now listed on the State Register of Heritage Places and treasured by the local community groups that use it.

The single dwelling covenant in large parts of Coolbinia, Menora and Mount Lawley is very sacrosanct to the local community as State Parliamentarians have come to learn. Rod was a strong supporter of the Transfer of Land Amendment Act 1998 making it harder for residents to remove a covenant by Supreme Court order without the support of the majority of those in the community most likely to be affected.

Rod was instrumental in pushing for underground power in Mount Lawley and tells me former Energy Minister, Hon. Colin Barnett used to call him “Mr Underground Power” because he was always reminding the Minister of the suburb’s desire for underground power.

Rod was supportive of the upgrade in Beaufort Street, Mount Lawley and a strong supporter with his fellow Lawley and Inglewood Ward Councillors of the Beaufort Street Scheme Amendment now with the Minister for Planning and supported strongly by the Society.

Like Terry Tyzack, Rod was a strong supporter of the 2007 Character Retention Guidelines and continued to support revisions of the Guidelines to improve their effectiveness. Rod was also a supporter of the first ever ‘demolition by neglect’ provisions implemented by any local Government body in WA, since copied by the WAPC and included in the model scheme text for all local authorities.

Rod has put in an enormous amount of voluntary hours serving his constituents and is a strong friend and supporter of the Society. Also, like Terry, Rod actually answered his Council phone, returned calls and replied to emails.

The Society understands Rod’s decision to call it a day but will miss the very close working relationship the Society had with him during his tenure.

Above citation prepared and read by Paul Collins, President.