

Remarks by Mayor Robert Bria
Reception in honour of Mr Brian Essery
Honorary Freedom of the City Award
Monday, 29 May 2017

Good Evening

Welcome to the Mayor's Parlour in the Norwood Town Hall for this reception to honour Mr Brian Essery who will shortly receive the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters Freedom of the City Award.

I would firstly like to acknowledge this land that we meet on today is the traditional land of the Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual connection with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kurna People as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still important to the living Kurna people today.

Welcome to you Brian and congratulations.

Welcome also to members of Brian's family, in particular his son Myles.

I understand his daughter, Jane, is in Queensland and couldn't be here this evening.

It is terrific to see other members of Brian's extended family here, although a few could not make it.

Last Thursday, I received a surprise call from Brian's cousin, Leslie who told me she was the eldest daughter of William Essery Jr - Brian's uncle - to advise me that she was unable to attend this evening and asked me to pass on her best wishes to Brian, on your award and for a wonderful evening.

It is also great to see many of Brian's friends and acquaintances whom he has worked alongside in associations, clubs and committees for many years.

Noting such attendance this evening is clearly a mark of the respect and high esteem in which Brian is held.

It is very rare that during the course of a person's life the combined years of their service to the community exceeds a century.

But tonight, we meet to recognise such a person.

The fact that Brian Essery is only the third person to receive this award in the nearly 20 year history of this City, is testament to how highly he is regarded and how prestigious this award is.

The previous two recipients were the late Mayor Laurie Fioravanti and the late Florence 'Fluff' Matthews OAM, who volunteered at the St Peters Library for 57 years.

The Freedom of the City is awarded to persons, who in the view of the Council have:

- Made a significant and conspicuous contribution to the development of the local community, either as a citizen or as an Elected Member or as a Volunteer (not necessarily as a resident of the City)

- Contributed for a period of at least twenty-five (25) years, either continuously or cumulatively: and
- Provided services of an outstanding and special quality that have benefited the welfare of the local and wider community

The Council's policy regarding recipients for this award stipulates that the decision by Elected Members must be unanimous.

It goes without saying that the Essery name has a long and distinguished association with our City, in particular with Kensington and Norwood.

William Essery Sr, Brian's grandfather, served as Mayor of the former Town of Kensington and Norwood in the 1920s for a period of three years, and a further 20 years as an Elected Member.

His son, William Essery Jr, Brian's uncle, was a life member of the Norwood Footfall Club, contributing more than 20 years of service in a variety of roles including secretary of the Reserves or Norwood 'B' Team as it was then known, and as a committee member for the League team.

Of course, there was Leonard Essery, Brian's father who served in the 32nd Battalion on the Western Front in France during the First World War.

During the World War II, Leonard served in the Volunteer Defence Corps. A co-director of the family company with his brother William Jr, Leonard devoted his life to his community in a number of roles, including:

- Rotary Club of Norwood
- President, Bowling Club of Norwood
- President of the Norwood RSL
- Member of Marryatville High School Governing Council

It was inevitable therefore, that Brian would follow in the footsteps of his forebears and devote his time, energy and skills to improve the well-being of his community and lift in our City.

As the saying goes, "the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree."

For more than half a century, Brian Essery has devoted himself to the local community through a variety of endeavours.

Indeed, his service to the community is rivalled perhaps only by the late Norm Wilson, who was a close friend of Brian's; I know Brian felt Norm's loss deeply.

Brian's resume of service to his community is long and includes:

- Rotary Club of Norwood (Member) for 36 years
- Volunteer at Rotary Club of St Peters Op Shop for 10 years
- Kensington and Norwood Historical Band (President) for 17 years
- Kensington and Norwood Historical Society for 9 years
- Elected Member for the former City of Kensington and Norwood for 8 years
- A member of the Norwood Football Club since 1969 and a Football Club Committee member for 14 years.

Brian's other various roles include:

- Volunteer for the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters (Cultural Heritage) for 10 years
- Member of the Probus Club
- Development of Norwood Aged Cottage Homes

In recognition of his outstanding service to the community of Norwood Payneham and St Peters, Brian was awarded the City's 2016 Citizen of the Year Award - a fitting honour to add to the many other accolades he has received for his contributions over several decades.

Sadly, Brian couldn't share this honour with Valerie, his wife of more than 62 years, who passed away only a few months before.

I have no doubt that your beloved Valerie is looking down on you this evening Brian with a big smile, full of pride and love, just as she did on Australia Day last year.

Now, Brian has the Freedom of the City Award to add to his well-deserved list of accolades.

Anyone who knows Brian can't but help admire the way he has gone about his work and still does; quietly, diligently and professionally.

Always unassuming, Brian has never sought the limelight, instead preferring to share the fruit of his extraordinary labours with friends, colleagues and of course the community he has so selflessly served.

His humility and unwavering commitment of service to others is a shining example of the active citizenship that makes our community a better place to live, work and play.

Brian is a regular at Norwood home games and it is a pleasure to share his company during the half-time break in the Mayor's Parlour under the Western Stand.

Brian, on behalf of the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters, it is my great honour and privilege to present you the Freedom of the City Award.

Brian, please come forward to accept your award and say a few words.

BRIAN ESSERY SPEAKS