

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-remains-in-his-debt-city-mourns-loss-of-visionary-jack-munday-20210310-p579gd.html>

'Sydney remains in his debt': City mourns loss of 'visionary' Jack Munday

By [Tim Barlass](#)

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The first time Jack Munday took his future wife Judith on a date it was to the ballet. The second time was to a Ban the Bomb march. The unionist and Communist Party member nailed his colours to the mast early on. The marriage lasted 55 years.

And on Wednesday, activist and feminist Judith Munday joined Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore and former premier Bob Carr to speak at the Jack Munday State Memorial Service in honour of the “visionary” leader who saved the face of Sydney. Munday [died in May last year](#).

[People arrive at Sydney’s Town Hall for the memorial of Jack Munday on Wednesday. *CREDIT: KATE GERAGHTY*]

By 10am the queue for the memorial was already 75-strong, stretching in front of the sandstone facade of Town Hall with flags almost fluttering at half mast.

More than 500 eventually half-filled the burgundy velvet seats of the imposing Centennial Hall. There would have been more but for COVID restrictions.

[Former unionist Jack Munday, known for leading a series of green bans to prevent overdevelopment in Sydney, died in May last year. *CREDIT: TONY WALTERS*]

Helen Temple, near the back of the queue, who worked with the Historic Houses Trust of which Munday was chairman, summed up Munday’s contribution to Sydney. “His fingerprints are all over this city. He really gave his life in service for its conservation.”

Munday was a professional footballer, a league player for Parramatta Eels, a labourer, councillor, Vietnam conscription protester and member of the Communist Party of Australia – and he soon learnt to put himself on the line for multiple causes. He also made time to fight for gay rights, women’s equality and Indigenous recognition along the way.

In the 1970s as leader of the Builders Labourers Federation he instituted some 40 green bans where union members refused to work on certain projects earmarked for demolition and high-rise development. He saved many of Sydney's inner heritage areas including The Rocks, Woolloomooloo, parts of Centennial Park, The Botanic Gardens, Aboriginal housing in Redfern and more.

MC Bob Carr said Munday galvanised public opinion and laid the basis of heritage protection. "He was taking on the developers who under premier Askin were levelling Sydney block by block. Developer power was all that mattered in Sydney until Jack spoke out," Mr Carr said.

National secretary of the CFMEU David Noonan said historic buildings were still under threat today, citing the example of Willow Grove in Parramatta. "[It] is a beautiful historic building scheduled for destruction and I am so proud to say it is the CFMEU and the building unions that stand with the community. That's the spirit of the green bans, that's the spirit of the NSW BLF – and that's the spirit of Jack Munday."

Lord mayor Moore said Munday was active in a time of "wholesale, even gleeful destruction".

"All of us will miss Jack and all of Sydney remains in his debt," she said.

Former director of the Historic Houses Trust Peter Watts said Dame Marie Bashir (former governor of NSW) was one of Munday's greatest fans. Looking towards Dame Marie in the memorial audience, he said: "She once leant over and whispered to me when Jack was speaking at an event: 'We all love that man, the best people are a good mix of red and green'."

Watts said he had to wrangle Munday into a formal dinner suit on occasions. "For somebody who regarded the tie as a symbol of capitalism that was quite a task both philosophically and practically. All I can say is thank goodness for clip-on bow ties."

He went on: "Exhibition opening nights, particularly at the Museum of Sydney changed character and we were delighted to welcome many of Jack's old union mates who turned up in numbers. The proportion of beer to chardonnay changed quite dramatically. Jack played from the heart as well as the head. He instinctively knew what was right."

The Sydney Trade Union Choir in red T-shirts sang *Solidarity Forever* at the service and we watched black and white footage of Munday, with trademark sideburns, being arrested one more time while the soundtrack of John Lennon's *Imagine* filled the hall.

[Judith Munday wife of the deceased Jack Munday pays tribute to her husband during the State Memorial Service at Sydney Town Hall,*CREDIT:POOL*]

Mr Carr introduced Judith Munday and said she knew “our national living treasure” better than anyone.

Judith said at the age of 90 her husband had turned out to support the schools and student rally against climate change. He was quick-witted, courageous, calm, ethical, optimistic, inspired and inspiring, she said.