

Remembering a friend

The mate

PETA-ANN KEEGAN

"A BIG man with a big heart" is how Norm Murphy remembers his mate, Don Mackay.

Mr Murphy remembers Don Mackay with warmth and a smile. "He was a gentleman beyond reproach, a big man with a big heart ... A Liberal candidate who had the respect of everyone who knew him. He was a one off, Don Mackay," he said.

Norm remembers the months and years following Mackay's disappearance and the media frenzy which unfairly targeted Italians. "No one was more upset than the Italians. Every society has its crooks, but why for all the wonderful things in the world did the judge give the police notebooks to the defence, I'll never know," he said.

Not long before his disappearance, Don Mackay had driven to Sydney to inform the police of a massive marijuana crop near Coleambally.

He didn't trust the Griffith police and it was later proven they were protecting and dabbling in organised crime. When charges were laid in court, the defence was handed a copy of the notebooks which included Don Mackay's name as an informant.

This is the reason, the commission found, that Mackay was murdered - because he knew too much.

"I don't think Don Mackay knew that much at all ... I remember there were rumours at the time about a briefcase at the bank with all this information. I don't think these rumours did anything to keep a good man alive," Mr Murphy said.



NORM Murphy describes his friend Don Mackay as a "one off".

'Build a statue to Mackay'

The fallout

BRYDIE FLYNN

ON THE thirtieth anniversary of his murder, calls are being heard for anti-drugs campaigner Don Mackay to be immortalised in a statue in Banna Avenue.

For many, Don's highly publicised murder is still a sensitive issue, but others say the time is right to stop sweeping painful memories under the carpet and remember Don's bravery and community minded spirit.

"There's a Mackay Avenue but that's not enough. We need something more prominent," Griffith Ratepayers' and Residents' Association (GRRRA) secretary Margaret MacGregor said.

"This was a man in the prime of his life who was campaigning against illegal drugs. His death triggered a royal commission which exposed widespread corruption and Australia will never have another one like it."

Despite the passing of time, she believes organised crime in Griffith is just as prevalent as it was in the 70s, with drug money still poisoning the city's streets.

"I believe we definitely have a mafia here - it's not a myth," she said. And speaking out is just as difficult now as it was then.

"It is still very dangerous and it seems like I am the only one pre-

'We definitely have a mafia here - it's not a myth.'

GRRRA secretary Margaret MacGregor

pared to speak out," she said.

But mayor Dino Zappacosta rejected the allegation of any mafia operating in Griffith, saying it could be nothing more than an unsubstantiated myth.

"I have no evidence to indicate there's an active mafia or honoured society in Griffith," Cr Zappacosta said. "I wouldn't say Griffith is built on black money unless people are prepared to put up names or information."

As to whether Griffith had been built on black money, he said: "there are a lot of successful business people who have grown their businesses to great heights and there is no crime in having a successful business."

And while Griffith may not have yet lost its "built on dope" and "Mafioso crime patch" reputation, the stigma is gradually fading, he said.

"It's going to take at least another generation before the issue finally fades away," he said.

Finger pointing at Italian community in the 70s

ITALIAN-BORN Griffith resident Annalisa Surian is proud of her heritage.

But there was a time, in the late 70s, where Annalisa painfully admits she was almost ashamed to be Italian.

"My one wish is that Don Mackay's body could be found ... only then might the Mackay family and the entire community get some rest," she said. Annalisa remembers the morning when she heard the whispers that Don Mackay had gone missing.

"There was a lot of finger pointing and (Griffith was) just an uncomfortable place for many years."

Maritime Infrastructure Program

IMPROVING YOUR BOATING AMENITIES

Boating and community organisations, local and State government authorities are invited to submit applications by 10 August 2007 for projects suitable for grant funding under the Maritime Infrastructure Program (MIP).

As part of the integrated management of State waterways, NSW Maritime provides dollar for dollar funding of waterway infrastructure under MIP, to improve amenities for the general boating public.

Projects eligible for funding include: public wharves/jetties; boat ramps including trailer parking and lighting; public sewage pumpouts; dinghy storage and public moorings.

For further information, contact your regional office of NSW Maritime or Info Line **13 12 56**.

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Australian Government

Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

New Funding for Respite Services

The Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) is calling for eligible non-government organisations (NGOs) to apply for funding to build their capacity for delivering respite services.

This funding will provide NGOs with the opportunity to develop new and innovative options for increasing the availability and supply of flexible and appropriate respite services. It will be used to support delivery of:

- the Mental Health National Respite Development Fund a component of the Mental Health Respite Program. The Mental Health Respite Program is an initiative that forms part of the Council of Australian Governments' National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006 - 2011 that provides funding over five years
- the new Respite for Older Carers of Children with Disability initiative, which provides funding of \$270 million over five years to assist those aged 60 years and over who are caring for children with disability aged 25 years and over.

The application package is available on the FaCSIA website at

www.facsia.gov.au/mentalhealth or by calling the New Funding for Respite Services application hotline on 1800 733 413.

The hotline is available from Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm AEST (Australian Eastern Standard Time) commencing on Monday, 9 July 2007.

Applications close at **5pm AEST on Friday, 3 August 2007**.

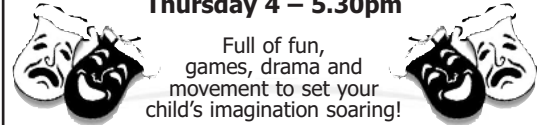
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