Glen Eira Mayor Cr Margaret Esakoff welcomes new citizen Wilfredo Macasa. Photo: Photography by Michele.

Council welcomes new citizens to Glen Eira

Council held its first *Citizenship Ceremony* for 2020 on *Australia Day*, welcoming 150 new citizens to Glen Eira from 33 different countries.

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Council CEO Rebecca McKenzie was MC for the *Ceremony*, with Glen Eira Mayor Cr Margaret Esakoff as the presiding officer. The *Ceremony* was also attended by Deputy Mayor Cr Dan Sztrajt; Cr Tony Athanasopoulos; Cr Anne-Marie Cade; Cr Jamie Hyams; Cr Jim Magee; Cr Joel Silver; Member for Macnamara Josh Burns MP; Member for Caulfield David Southwick MP; Member for Bentleigh Nick Staikos MP; and Member for Southern Metropolitan Region Nina Taylor MLC.

The *Ceremony* was a day of welcome, a day of unity and a day of community. Each new citizen was presented with a Citizenship Certificate and a small gift. Aunty Fay Stewart-Muir from the Boon Wurrung Foundation delivered the *Welcome to Country* and also presented new citizens with a Welcome Certificate.

In her address Cr Esakoff said the City of Glen Eira is fortunate to be able to embrace and welcome the diversity of so many cultures.

"For me, these citizenship ceremonies are one of the most enjoyable parts of my role, partly because of seeing so many of you so excited at becoming Australian citizens," she said.

"This reinforces my strong conviction that this is a great country — a country to be proud of.

"It is a privilege to live in a country where democracy and freedom are part of our daily life, and opportunities are there for the taking.

"This *Ceremony* is the final step on the road to fully embrace the country in which you now live."

Cr Esakoff said we should also never forget, and indeed be proud that Australia is home to the world's oldest continuous living culture — our indigenous culture.

"I thank Aunty Fay for sharing some of her culture with us, making this *Ceremony* even more special," she said.

Filipino born migrant Wilfredo Macasa, his wife Carina and three children Vincent, Marygrace and Francis took the Australian citizenship pledge.

Wilfredo told *Glen Eira News* they came to Australia on 19 September 2009.

"We chose to become Australian citizens for the good opportunity and a secure future for my family, especially my children," he said.

"Becoming an Australian citizen is a great honour and a privilege. Australia is a great country to live in and has lots to offer to all citizens."

Local student lends a helping hand

Meet Ben from Caulfield. Not only is the 12-year-old a keen bike rider, but he is passionate about the environment.

As part of his education in the year leading up to his *Bar Mitzvah* (which will be when he is 13), Ben was required to create and complete a project that would not only benefit the environment, but also his local community.

He contacted *Glen Eira News* to tell us about his project and how he became involved with volunteer-run charity Bicycles for Humanity Melbourne.

"My parents showed me an article about Bicycles for Humanity Melbourne in *Glen Eira News* and I was really keen to help," he said.

"I often see unwanted bikes discarded on the nature strips around our area. I thought if I could get these bikes to the people who need them in Africa, it could help them in so many ways, and at the same time, I could reduce landfill here.

"I was excited about choosing this project as I can see how much having a bike benefits people in less fortunate situations. A bike can help some people get to work or school, get food and water or bring things to sell at the market."

Over a couple of months, Ben kept a lookout for discarded bikes in his local area.

"We then contacted Michael from Bicycles for Humanity Melbourne, who came to our place and checked over the five bikes I had collected," he said.

"Michael was really nice and told me that each of the bikes would be tagged with my name. It's possible that the people who get the bikes might send me a message, which would be great."

How you can help

If you have a bicycle that you no longer need and it's 20 inches or larger and in good condition, email **info@bicyclesforhumanity.com**

The bicycle will then be collected by a member of Bicycles for Humanity Melbourne Bayside Collection Team, tagged and numbered, and transported to a storage and packing facility in Dingley.

For further information, visit **https://bicyclesforhumanity.com**

Ben with the five bikes he collected and donated to Bicycles for Humanity Melbourne.