

10.3. Recognition - Freddie Lane

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ENDORSED BY	Luke Harvey, Director Corporate Services
ATTACHMENTS	1. Freddie Lane portrait [10.3.1 - 1 page] 2. MacCallum Pool plaque [10.3.2 - 1 page] 3. Noeline Maclean Australian Springboard Champion 1946 [10.3.3 - 1 page] 4. Joan Wakeham [10.3.4 - 1 page]
CSP LINK	4. Our Social Vitality 4.3 North Sydney's history is preserved and recognised

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to respond to a Council resolution of 24 June 2024, seeking information on an appropriate acknowledgement of Freddie Lane (deceased), Olympic gold medal swimmer and Cremorne resident.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Freddie Lane was the first Australian swimmer to win an Olympic gold medal, at the 1900 Paris Olympics.
- Lane moved to Cremorne Point in 1912 and initiated the construction of a harbour pool that would become known as the Maccallum Pool, after Hugh Maccallum, who was recognised in a 1933 plaque as the primary figure behind the pool's success.
- It is not appropriate to write Hugh Maccallum's name out of history, therefore the request to rename the Maccallum Pool is not recommended, however commemorating Freddie Lane offers an opportunity to consider how to remember the exploits of other swimming champions with connections to North Sydney.
- North Sydney has a remarkable place in the history of Australian swimming, as home to both the famous Lavender Bay Baths and North Sydney Olympic Pool. Eighty-four world records were broken at the pool.
- The 90th anniversary of the North Sydney Olympic Pool in 2026 is an opportune moment to commemorate those champions in the form of a creative installation at the newly refurbished pool.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Freddie Lane be one of the swimmers acknowledged as part of a new artwork that celebrates North Sydney's historic association with Australian competitive swimming, and that the artwork be located outside the North Sydney Olympic Pool, to be unveiled to coincide with the Pool's 90th anniversary in 2026.

Background

At the Council meeting 24 June 2024, Council resolved

1. *THAT Council call for a report outlining an appropriate way to recognise former North Sydney resident Freddie Lane (1880-1969) who was an Olympic Gold Medallist and significant contributor to the building of the MacCallum Pool.*
2. *THAT Council Historian Dr Ian Hoskins be consulted and invited to make recommendations as to appropriate ways to recognise Freddie Lane.*

Report

Frederick Claude Vivian Lane (1879-1969) was the Australia's first Olympic swimmer (see Attachment 1). Having competed successfully as a boy around Sydney's various swimming baths in the 1890s, he won two gold medals at the 1900 Paris Games. Lane had several Australasian and international successes after that but retired from competitive swimming around 1903. His entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* notes that he won 'about 350 trophies, including over 100 medals'.

Lane moved to 19 Milson Road Cremorne, in 1912 and lived there until 1923 when he moved to nearby Cremorne Road. He owned that house until his death in 1969 but in later years spent a great deal of time at Mona Vale where he had a second dwelling. He was the first President of the Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club in 1922.

Lane is credited with initiating and possibly completing the construction of a swimming pool in the harbour at Cremorne Point by building walls from rocks and stone found nearby. This pool is known as the Maccallum Pool today. Lane presumably built the pool while he lived nearby at Milson Road. Ms Hinchcliffe recalls her grandfather telling her of this project. Lane's involvement is supported by an oral history with local resident and early pool user Josephine Holm conducted by Stanton Library staff in the 1990s: 'He [Lane] started the rock pool; rocks [came] from round about. It was sort of enlarged over the years. Then Mr Lane sold his house and went over to Cremorne Road and Mr Maccallum took over the pool ...' Maccallum's house on Milson Road backed on to Cremorne Point reserve very near the Pool.

It is apparent from a document still held by Ms Hinchcliffe that Lane and Maccallum worked together to improve the Pool, probably in the 1920s. They formed a club of sorts and secured donations from locals for the improvements. Lane was the Honorary Secretary, and Maccallum was the Honorary Treasurer. Ms Hinchcliffe recalls her grandfather telling her that he built a second rock pool below his house in Cremorne Road in the mid to late 1920s. As Josephine Holm recalled, Maccallum 'took over' management of the first pool from this time.

Certainly by 1933 it was Hugh Maccallum who was most associated with that pool. Then North Sydney Council took charge of maintaining it as a local amenity and installed a granite tablet at the entrance which named it 'The Maccallum Pool' and commemorated 'the services rendered to the residents by Hugh Maccallum Esq'. That plaque survives, and the inscription was regilded in 2018 (see Attachment 2). It is not considered appropriate nor feasible to rename the Pool in honour of Freddie Lane.

Lane is not widely remembered in the country he represented at the Paris Olympics, the city in which he began his illustrious swimming career, nor the municipality he called home from 1912 and to which he contributed greatly.

Lane is one of six swimming champions associated with North Sydney whose achievements saw them celebrated in their lifetimes but who have faded from public memory in the past 50 years. All deserve to be reinstated in that public memory.

The others are:

- Richmond 'Dick' Cavill (1884-1938): Dick was the son of Frederick Cavill the swimming instructor who ran the Lavender Bay Baths. He is regarded as one of the handful of competitive swimmers who developed the Australian Crawl which in turn became modern freestyle. He did so at Lavender Bay, one of the crucibles of Australian competitive swimming in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Barney Kieran (1886-1905): In his short competitive career from 1904 to 1905, Kieran was regarded as one of the world's greatest swimmers, winning dozens of medals in Australia and overseas and setting at least five world records. His mother lived in Burton Street, Milsons Point, and Barney swam regularly at the Lavender Bay Baths. So much so that after he died of complications following an appendectomy, the North Sydney Amateur Swimming Club raised money for a monument in his honour at Gore Hill cemetery.
- Sarah 'Fanny' Durack (1889-1956): Durack was Australia's first Olympic gold winning female swimmer (Stockholm 1912). She was a pioneer of women's competitive swimming. She consolidated her reputation at Lavender Bay Baths in 1900. Durack won the NSW 100 yards Championships there in 1913. Although she swam at many locations in Sydney, the *Freeman's Journal* called Durack a 'Lavender Bay girl' upon her retirement in 1921. After she died in 1956 a bronze plaque was installed at the North Sydney Olympic Pool in her honour.
- Joan Wakeham nee Thomas (1920-2010?): Wakeham was raised at Lavender Bay and learned to swim competitively at the Baths in the 1920 and 1930s. She represented Australia in breaststroke at the 1938 Empire Games held at the newly completed North Sydney Olympic Pool which became the main venue for competitive swimming in Sydney, eclipsing the Lavender Bay Baths and indeed all other facilities. Joan was placed fourth. She became a regular swimming instructor at the Pool working with war veterans and amputees in the 1930s and 1940s (see Attachment 4).
- Noelene Dahlen-Maclean: Noelene was a champion diver and a synchronised swimmer who competed and performed regularly at the North Sydney Olympic Pool in the 1940s and 1950s. She became the Australian Springboard Champion there in 1946. Noelene was a member of the diving team which won gold at the 1950 Empire Games.

At least 86 world swimming records have been broken at North Sydney Olympic Pool and form part of the celebration of achievements to be commemorated.

The refurbishment of the North Sydney Olympic Pool offers an opportunity to commemorate all the abovementioned athletes. There will be interpretative signage and displays within the complex, and there is an interpretation plan which includes the installation of a statue of a

woman diving at the corner of Alfred and Paul Streets, Milsons Point. That idea appears to have been inspired by the photograph of Noelene Maclean mid-air in front of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (see Attachment 3).

It is feasible therefore to invite expressions of interest from artists for a creative installation which marks the achievements of all these athletes, and the broader history of the pool. The vicinity of North Sydney Olympic Pool is the ideal location for such a commemoration, for it was the premier swimming venue in the country in the so-called 'golden age' of Australian competitive swimming, from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Installation of such a work could be scheduled to coincide with the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Pool, in March 2026.

Consultation requirements

So that a range of creative responses and interpretations are received, an Expression of Interest and short list process would be undertaken by the Arts Team. The expression of interest document is to be a collaboration between Historical Services and the Arts team so that historical facts and best practice public art practices can be utilised to provide a scope of works.

A panel of relevant experts from across Council and the community will form the selection panel and be responsible for short-listing the artists.

Financial/Resource Implications

A project of this scope would require a budget of up to \$150,000.





MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH SYDNEY
THE MACCALLUM POOL

THIS TABLET COMMEMORATES THE SERVICES
RENDERED TO THE RESIDENTS BY

HUGH MACCALLUM ESQ.

IN CONNECTION WITH THIS SWIMMING POOL
UNVEILED APRIL 1933 BY
ALD. R. L. ... ON MAYOR



