



### **Unlocking Camden's Local History**

Unlock Camden began in 2019, an initiative of the Camden Council Heritage Advisory Committee, the ambition of Unlock to focus community attention to the area's rich colonial history. Delivered as part of the Annual Camden Festival Program the event coincides with History Council of New South Wales, History Week.

The inaugural Unlock Camden was based within the grounds of the historic Alan Baker Art Gallery on John Street. The boutique event involved displays of community organisations and promotion of Camden's Heritage walk. Each year Unlock Camden has continued to tell the Camden story through walks, art, images, #MyCamdenStory, and a host of other activities.

Beginning as the story of the town center representative of the Australian story narrative, the event founded on Dharawal country, continues to evolve and embrace the unique history and heritage of the Camden township and the people.

Promoting community identity and sense of place, Unlock Camden Fosters community engagement and activities that support education, promoting local tourism, and support for both cultural and heritage tourism.

Securing a grant through Heritage NSW 2023-2025 Local Government Heritage Grants Program, enabled the 2023 Unlock Camden Program to deliver a collection of exhibitions that intertwined artist demonstrations, traditional art workshops, and engagement activities with a storytelling approach to delivering a dynamic and all-encompassing tribute to a community's heritage.

Delivering a vibrant tapestry where the past, present, and future of the town are interwoven, offering an immersive experience that not only unlocks the stories of community but also ignites a sense of pride, cultural preservation, and intergenerational connection. The integrated approach becoming a catalyst for the ongoing celebration and education of the town's rich history, inspiring residents to cherish their heritage and continue to be the authors of their community's unfolding narrative.

## **2023 The Exhibition Series – Unlocking Camden for Everyone**

A collection of exhibitions that work together can be a powerful means of capturing heritage, educating the community, celebrating history, and unlocking significant stories to awaken the community's pride in its heritage. The Unlock Camden exhibition series formed a comprehensive historical narrative of the community. Each exhibition focused on different aspects of the town's heritage, such as significant individuals, places, objects, and events, contributing to a rich and multifaceted understanding of Camden's history.

The various exhibitions offered diverse perspectives on the town's heritage, showcasing the broad range of experiences and contributions that have shaped community. The diversity highlighting the inclusive and multifaceted nature of the town's history.

Collaboratively the exhibitions create educational pathways for community members, catering to different age groups and interests, and serving as a dynamic educational resource for schools, local organisations, and the public.

Whilst the exhibitions cover various aspects of the town's heritage, they share common themes that unite them. These themes underscore the continuity of cultural values, the resilience of community, and the significance of preservation.

As a collection, the series engaged various senses, not just visual but also auditory, tactile and interactive. This approach makes history come alive, creating a multisensory experience that is more memorable and impactful.

Involving the participation of community, residents were encouraged to contribute their own stories, artifacts, and experiences. The involvement fostering a sense of ownership and pride in preserving the town's heritage. Allowing locals to interpret and express themselves through their various engagement added an emotional dimension to the historical narrative, connecting with visitors on a deeper level. A connection which bridged the generational gap by highlighting how the past has shaped the present, prompting dialogue between generations, enabling older community members to share their memories and younger generations to learn and be inspired by their community's history.

Collectively, these exhibitions awaken the cultural and historic identity. They connect residents and encourage residents to recognise the value of heritage, fostering a sense of pride and unity in the shared history of the town. Allowing for the celebration and commemoration of key elements, events and individuals in Camden's history honouring contributions and marking milestones in the community's development.

The collection of exhibitions works together to form a holistic approach to preserving, celebrating, and educating the community about its heritage whilst addressing a wide range of historical aspects and involving the community actively. Unlock Camden program provided a powerful catalyst for unlocking the town's cultural legacy whilst educating and inspiring future generations.

## #MyCamdenStory



Committee member Laura Jane Auslebrook, a ‘local identity and Camden’s living piece of history’ launched the #mycamdenstory social media campaign in 2019. Residents were invited to uncover their untold stories behind Camden’s rich and diverse history.

Information gathered contributing to the mapping of Camden’s oral history as part of a knowledge-sharing and story-telling program that describes the people, places and events that have shaped the identity of the area. The stories short, authentic and even quirky tell of memories and experiences across the Camden area.

Camden, like many other towns, has a rich and complex history. #MyCamdenStory helps in preserving and sharing the stories of people, events and places that have shaped the town and the lives of its people over years. Including images and stories of childhood, cultural events, historical landmarks, and the lives of residents.

Engaging community in the process of documenting their own history the program helps to foster a sense of community pride in the local heritage of Camden. Documenting and sharing Camden’s history, provides a valuable educational resource for students, researchers, and the general public unveiling insights into the town’s past, including important events, social changes, and the contributions of individuals and communities.

#MyCamdenStory continues to preserve the cultural heritage of the town; collecting oral histories, photographs, and other artifacts that are essential in understanding and celebrating the cultural diversity of Camden.

Camden’s history is marked by both progress and challenges, through the documented history we capture a valuable resource for understanding how the town has evolved and the challenges faced assist to inform future decision making.

#MyCamdenStory plays a crucial role in ensuring the town’s history is not lost to time and that it continues to influence the community’s identity and future.

## Local Heroes



'Everyday Hero'  
Kristina Took



'Santa My Hero'  
Kristina Took



'Paulo the Welder'  
Kym Slater



'Paulo & Albert'  
Kym Slater



'Brother is a Hero'  
Linda Ransom



'Self  
Portrait'  
Meg Wood



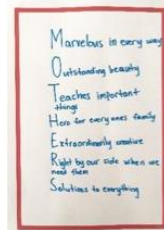
'Woman Kindness'  
Kristina Took



'Replenish'  
Melissa Klaassen-Vicevic



'Fathers'  
Mia Ransom



'Mothers'  
Mia Ransom



'Giribunger'  
Michael Fardon



'Keith Payne VC'  
Michele Arentz



'Save Campbelltown Wildlife'  
Leela Stuccebauer



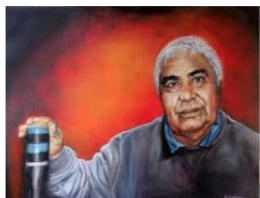
'Portrait Of His Dad Working At The  
Hospital'  
Liam Hughes



'Grandpa is a Hero'  
Linda Ransom



'Soul Connections'  
Melissa Klaassen-Vicevic



'Uncle Ivan Wellington'  
Michele Arentz



'My Sister, My Hero'  
Olivia Leadbeatter



'Kindred Spirit'  
Tracey Prioste



'Blue'  
Uinise Yaki

Celebrating our Local Heroes is a curated streetside exhibition featuring artworks created by local community including photography, visual art, and poetry. The artwork is displayed on guard rails, planter boxes, bus shelters, and bins throughout Camden Town Centre. The exhibition provides a colourful streetscape and opportunity for visitors and locals to admire the talent of our community.

Celebrating Our Local Heroes is an exhibition to acknowledge the people in our lives and throughout history that have been integral in shaping our culture, community, and us as individuals. People such as parents, leaders, Elders, historic characters, and friends are amongst those who have inspired, shared tradition and culture, and helped us to understand our ancestry, values and heritage, leading us to grow as individuals.

The community exhibition captures stories of people, identifying story-telling images of their local heroes who in some ways influenced, contributed or inspired the community or individuals in various ways.

The exhibition has left an indelible mark on the lives of the audience and those recognised as heroes. Not just a static display of images; it provided a dynamic experience that touched the hearts and souls of the community, leaving a lasting impact.

As visitors explored the works, they were immediately immersed in a world of extraordinary tales. The stories of local heroes came to life, and the images on display were more than just photographs or artworks – they were windows into the past, illuminating the extraordinary journeys of these remarkable individuals.

The heroes recognised in the exhibition provided a celebration of resilience and determination, many of the heroes overcoming adversities. Visitors were moved by the stories of adversity conquered and dreams realised captured through the images. The local heroes becoming symbols of resilience and determination, reminding the community that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, they too can achieve greatness.

The exhibition acted as a catalyst for community unity. It wasn't just an exhibition; it was a shared experience that brought people from all walks of life together. Visitors discovered a sense of pride in their shared history and heritage, and a renewed sense of purpose in preserving and celebrating their local culture and legacy.

The most remarkable impact was on the younger generation. Children and teenagers, as well as young adults, inspired by the local heroes. They saw greatness was not a distant concept but a tangible reality achievable by anyone with determination and a commitment to the betterment of their community.

For those recognised as heroes, the experience was deeply emotional. They were not just celebrated; they became role models for future generations. The heroes recognised the responsibility that came with their newfound status and in many cases motivated to continue their work, knowing that their impact extended far beyond their individual efforts.

A catalyst for change, not just about the past; but for future change. Community members, inspired by the stories displayed of the heroes, actively engaged in Unlock Camden to preserve their history, and ensure that the legacy of those heroes lived on.

The Local Heroes exhibition fostered connections and collaborations between community members, providing a platform for dialogue, engagement, and shared aspirations. People who may never have crossed paths were united by their shared love for their community and their shared commitment to its betterment.

The exhibition celebrating local heroes did more than just capture history; it ignited a fire within the hearts of the community. It left a profound and lasting impact on the lives of those who attended and on the heroes themselves. It inspired hope, unity, and a renewed sense of purpose, ensuring that the legacy of these local heroes would continue to inspire generations to come. A testament to the power of storytelling, resilience, and the enduring spirit of a community that treasures its history and looks forward to a bright future.

## Historic Characters



Capturing historic characters played a critical role in the delivery of the 2023 Unlock Camden Program. A series of historic characters representing key figures who have left a significant impact on the community displayed to share their contribution and experiences, preserving for future generations, providing valuable insights into the past.

The characters displayed embody the cultural, social history of the town. Celebrating achievements, resilience, determination the characters educate and engage

individuals with relatable stories of days gone by. The characters helping the community to appreciate the factors that shaped historic events and the community. As time passes, memories may fade, displaying these characters and capturing their story preserves their part in history, steps the audience back in time, and provides context for the past and present of Camden.

The impact of displaying historic people and places throughout the Camden Town Centre to educate the community has been profound. The historic figures and places acting as a living archive, preserving the cultural heritage of the town. Residents have gained a newfound appreciation for the rich tapestry of stories, traditions, and landmarks that have shaped their community over the years.

As people strolled through the town and encountered these displays, they were transported back in time. Feeling a deep sense of connection to the individuals and events that left an indelible mark on their community, instilling a profound sense of belonging and pride.

The educational aspect of these displays cannot be overstated. Children and adults alike have had the opportunity to learn about the town's history in an engaging and interactive way. These displays serve as open-air classrooms, where history comes to life, fostering a greater understanding of the town's cultural heritage.

The exhibition had a unifying effect on the community, providing a common point of reference and pride that brought people together, fostering a sense of collective identity.

The stories captured serve as a source of inspiration, inspiring residents to learn more about the accomplishments of those that came before them, reminding them that every individual has potential to make history.

The impact of these displays on the town's collective identity cannot be overstated. Residents take pride in their cultural heritage, and the displays have become symbols of that pride. They stand as a testament to the enduring spirit of the community and its commitment to preserving its legacy.

The act of displaying significant historic images throughout the town has a transformative impact. It preserves, celebrates, and educates the community about its cultural origins, heritage, enriching lives and strengthening the bonds that tie people to the town's unique and diverse history.

Supporting the program, the Camden Musical Society, dressed in historic clothing immersed themselves in a specific era, enhancing the understanding and appreciation of historical context, culture and customs. This immersive experience brought history to life and provided a tangible connection to the past, fostering a deeper sense of empathy, respect, and a more profound understanding of the challenges and traditions of the time, ultimately bridging the gap between the past and present in an engaging and memorable way.

## The Camden Heritage Walk



Heritage walks provide a means to explore the cultural and historic richness of a place, the architecture a reflection of the evolution of a society's values, technology and artistic expression. Camden Museum hosted a series of guided heritage walks through the Camden Town Centre allowing people to engage with historical sites, buildings, and landmarks as tangible connections to the past. The walks reinforcing the relevance celebrated, not forgotten, or lost in time.

Providing an educational experience, the walk gave insight into the history, customs and stories of a place. Educating the public about heritage, culture, significant architecture, fostering a deeper appreciation for the past. Tour guides shared principals of design, materials, styles of buildings to explain the unique character and values of the community and relevance of preservation.

Fostering an appreciation for architecture, the walks encouraged residents to take pride in the unique history and character of Camden. Through the study the tour supported an understanding of traditional skills and knowledge passed down through generations, inspiring the creation of innovative and sustainable designs that incorporate traditional elements.



Celebrating the rich architectural history, participants were educated in relation to the legacy of Camden, encouraged to consider the connection with the past, and appreciation for the aesthetic value of Camden.

Camden's Material and Colour Guide was introduced to participants to encourage sustainable practices in preservation and restoration within their own homes, this document evidenced to contribute to the conservation of resources and support-built heritage of the region providing practical guidance for materials and colours used for heritage housing across the LGA.

## Then and Now



Artists of all ages were invited to enter an Unlock Camden Small Works Art Exhibition. Artists were encouraged to submit a work that addressed the theme Camden – Then and Now, welcoming artwork, poetry or photography.

The art exhibition helped to evolve the cultural narratives of Camden by highlighting various aspects that hold significance to individuals. Whether capturing landmarks, objects, emblematic scenes, or people, the art told a broader story of the town's identity and transformations over time.

Through a variety of topics, the exhibition employed engaging storytelling to convey the town's history and the evolution of its defining elements. The diverse range of artworks drew viewers into the historical and contemporary tales of Camden, providing a window into Camden's history, the juxtaposition of past and present elements, whether places, objects, or scenes, encourage a deeper understanding of how the town has grown and developed while maintaining its core character.

The art exhibition inspired the community to appreciate and preserve the town's cultural heritage. Demonstrating how everyday objects and places hold historical and cultural significance, motivating residents to actively engage in efforts to protect and celebrate these aspects of Camden's identity.

By presenting elements associated with Camden through art, the exhibition encouraged community dialogue and connection. It prompted residents to engage in discussions about their towns past, present, and future, fostering a sense of shared identity.

The exhibition enriched the cultural fabric and promoted increased recognition of its cultural heritage. Individuals delved into their roots and acknowledged significance of objects, places, people and scenes that have played a pivotal role in shaping their community.

Through participation the community sense of ownership deepened, the exhibition capturing the essence of individuals to enrich the towns narrative. Bringing to life the history, significance, and transformation to prompt reflection, inspire and connect community.

### **Interactive Arts Engagement**





Including artist demonstrations, traditional art workshops, arts engagement activities and artist markets had a further positive impact, unlocking Camden's stories of community through participation and exploration.

Artist demonstrations and traditional art workshops provided a hand on, interactive learning experience for participants. Engaging with local artists, the visitors learnt about traditional techniques, and created their own artwork. The direct engagement encouraging a deeper appreciation for the heritage and a more profound connection to the community's history.

Art acting as a powerful medium for storytelling, the demonstrations and workshops offered a unique platform for local artists to interpret and express the history of Camden through their creations. The artworks serving as a visual narrative that captures the essence of the community and Camden's heritage.

Including the art workshops and interactive activities to cater for all ages provided an opportunity for the younger generations to learn from the older community who may share traditional skills. The intergenerational exchange fostering a sense of continuity and cultural preservation. Engagement activities encourage community to contribute expanding the depth of exhibitions.

Empowering local artists to highlight their talents and showcase their interpretation of Camden's heritage. The program has supported the local established and emerging artists, creating a sense of pride among artists.

Engaging visitors with activities builds awareness and helps them to form emotional connections with the history. Traditionally, art workshops promote the preservation of cultural traditions, ensuring the skills are passed down through the ages during Unlock Camden activities.

Activities used to commemorate essential elements of Unlock Camden serve as a means of paying tribute to those who made exceptional contributions. Working collaboratively artists can integrate into ongoing activities, keeping the stories alive and evolving.

The culmination of exhibitions, artist demonstrations, workshops and engagement activities create an immersive and participatory experience that not only unlocks the

stories of the community but empowers individuals to become stewards of their heritage.

As word of the historic displays spread, the influx of visitors engaging with Unlock Camden continues to increase. Creating a destination for visitors interested in cultural heritage to celebrate the town's unique history and culture benefiting the community, local business, the economy, and residents alike.

### **Our Individuals and Community**



An exhibition of the town's people, including community groups enthusiasts incorporating enthusiasts, collectors, and various activities like Devonshire teas by the County women's Association, a sausage sizzle by the Lions, museum displays, and family history displays, can celebrate the town's heritage and architecture.

Community groups, historic vehicles to capture history and connect the past with the present enhanced the overall experience and impact for the community to preserve and celebrate heritage.

Enthusiasts, passionate about their particular aspect of history brought specialist knowledge and authenticity to the historical narrative providing insights, stories, and demonstrations that enriched the understanding of specific eras.

Enthusiasts and their historic vehicles offered an interactive and immersive experience for visitors, people could touch, see and ride in these vehicles, stepping back in time to appreciate the technology, craftsmanship, and design of the past.

Involving community groups and enthusiasts fostered a sense of shared ownership and pride in preserving and celebrating local heritage creating a strong community bond around the shared love for history.

Community groups brought together people with diverse interests and areas of expertise, providing a comprehensive and multi-faceted view of the past. The diversity of perspectives enhances the richness of the historical narrative.

Historic vehicles, period clothing, and related items contribute to the authenticity of the historical experience, ensuring that the past is presented in a contextually accurate manner. Enthusiasts and community groups often excel in storytelling. Their passion and dedication to their interests offering an engaging narrative that captivates the audience, making history come alive.

Historical vehicles and period clothing add a living history element to the experience. Visitors witnessed and participated in activities that people from the past engaged in providing a vivid connection to a bygone era.

The town exhibition is a vibrant celebration of community spirit and heritage, where local residents, community groups, and enthusiasts come together to showcase their unique contributions to the town's rich history and architecture.

Local collectors and enthusiasts, with a deep passion for preserving the town's heritage, display their collections, artifacts, and historical finds. These dedicated individuals play a vital role in unearthing and sharing the stories of the community, fostering a profound appreciation for the town's history.

Museum displays offer a glimpse into the town's past, showcasing a curated selection of artifacts, photographs, and documents that narrate its history. These displays offer a structured and informative way to educate visitors about the community's heritage. Family history exhibits, on other hand, personalising the experience, sharing the unique stories and genealogical narratives of local families.

Unlock Camden as a collective exhibition connects the town's past and present, weaving a narrative that showcases how the architecture, culture and people have evolved and shaped the community over the years. It fosters an understanding of the town's growth and resilience while preserving its unique character.

As a town exhibition, which features the participation of community groups, collectors, enthusiasts, and a range of activities standing as a testament to the rich heritage and architectural beauty of the town. It provides a space for residents to share their stories, highlight the town's significant buildings, and foster a sense of community and cultural preservation. The vibrant Unlock Camden celebration not only honours the past but also nurtures a deeper appreciation for the town's unique identity.

In conclusion, organising a single event that incorporates historical enthusiasts, community groups, historic vehicles, architectural heritage, and a wide array of engaging activities, such as living history demonstrations, traditional art workshops, and local cuisine offerings, serves as a powerful platform for capturing and celebrating the town's rich heritage. This comprehensive event not only provides a holistic understanding of the community's history but also fosters a sense of shared identity, pride, and cultural preservation. It brings together people of all ages, connects the past with the present, and ensures the town's unique history and architectural treasures are cherished and passed on for generations to come.