**Speech/Briefing Information**

**DAME NELLIE MELBA 150TH ANNIVERSARY**

**‘I am Melba’ – a talk by author Ann Blainey**

**PREPARED FOR: Mayor Alison Clarke**

**EVENT: ‘I am Melba’ – a talk by Ann Blainey**

**DATE:** Sunday 22 May 2011

**EVENT TIME:** 2.30pm – 3.30pm

**ARRIVAL TIME:** 2.20pm

**SPEECH TIME:** 2.30pm

**VENUE & ADDRESS:** Richmond Library

415 Church Street

Richmond

**PARKING:**

**CONTACT PERSON:** Kirsty Baird, Community Arts Officer,

0447 502 699

**HOST:** City of Yarra

**TO BE MET BY:** Kirsty Baird

**OTHER SPEAKERS:** Ann Blainey

**IS THERE MEDIA:** Not confirmed

**WHO IS AUDIENCE:** General

**DRESS:** Casual

**Order of Proceedings**

2:20pm Arrival

2:30pm Mayor’s speech

2:40pm Ann Blainey

3:00 Q & A

3:10pm Recital

3:30pm Close

**Speech Notes**

* Good afternoon and thank you for coming.
* Before we hand over to Ann, Council would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri as the first owners of this country. Today they are still the custodians of the cultural heritage of this land. Further to this, Council acknowledges there are other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have lived, worked and contributed to the cultural heritage of Yarra.
* It is my pleasure to welcome you to hear Ann Blainey speak about the life and times of Dame Nellie Melba.
* As you most probably know, Dame Nellie was born in Richmond 150 years ago this month and Council has been celebrating her life with a series of events.
* We had a wonderful concert at Richmond Town Hall last Thursday which I hope you enjoyed if you attended.
* Today’s session has been bought to us by the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust and our thanks go to the Trust for their continued work honouring the legacy of Dame Nellie by providing scholarships and other opportunities to emerging opera singers throughout Australia.
* Dame Nellie’s journey from the tough, working class environment of Richmond to the most lavish opera houses in the world is a classic rags-to-riches story, although to be fair she was born into a fairly respectable family at Doonside.
* Melba’s name may still remembered through quirky culinary tributes but there are many aspects to the story of her famous life which have faded with the passing of time.
* In her book ‘I am Melba’, Ann examines the Melba story and through careful and meticulous research has thrust the life and travels of this great woman back into the spotlight where it belongs.
* As Jim Davidson said in his review of Ann’s book for The Age, if you’ll allow me to partially quote him:
* “There have been five biographies of Melba…but the one by Ann Blainey is superior to them all.”
* I don’t think there’s much more I can say after that kind of recommendation so thank you again for coming along and I’ll hand over to Ann to talk to you about Dame Nellie Melba, on and off the stage.
* Thank you.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Dame Nellie Melba (born Helen Porter Mitchell) was born on 19 May 1861 in Richmond. Melba was a celebrated opera singer who received international recognition and is acknowledged as an Australian treasure. The year 2011 will mark the 150 year anniversary since the birth of this significant performer.