

# PHILIP LEONG

1917 - 1999



## A Supermarket Visionary

In the 1950s Philip decided to turn the family-run corner store into a self-service shop. Philip's aim was to provide service to the community in the area in which they lived, given in those days there were very few motor vehicles. He borrowed 10,000 pounds from the Bank of New South Wales to build on the site of what is now the Hermit Park Shopping Centre, opening the self-service supermarket in 1959.

Soon after the Hermit Park renovations began, Philip was offered other shops for takeover. First – Railway Avenue, followed by a store in Oonoonba. At that time there were two grocery food groups from Brisbane operating stores in Townsville – the Manahan Group in Flinders Street, and Barry & Roberts in North Ward. Philip took over both stores in the 1950s. In 1960 Philip opened a second self-service store in Garbutt, then a third in Aitkenvale in 1963. His other shops included Belgian Gardens, Mundingburra, a warehouse in Garbutt and Westside Plaza.

In the late 1960s Philip saw a need for a shopping centre at Vincent where army personnel were moving. In 1970 he bought the land that would become the first complete shopping centre in Townsville, with a supermarket, 21 speciality shops and a carpark. Vincent Village, as it was called, opened in 1974.

Philip Leong was born in Zhonshan City, Quangdong Province, China, on the 25th of September 1917. After completing his schooling, he migrated to Australia in 1936 arriving in the port of Townsville where his parents awaited him. His father had migrated to Australia in 1917, and his mother in the early 1930s, and they owned and ran a store on the corner of Ackers Street and Charters Towers Road. In 1944 Philip's parents retired, leaving the family business to him. The same year Philip also married Edith Lee On, with the union producing five daughters and one son.

In April 1981, Philip sold his business to Woolworths, retaining the premises. Several of the stores carried on trading under his name for many years. Philip then became Managing Director of Philip Leong Investments Pty Ltd and remained involved in the community through business and philanthropy. He was a generous supporter of many community-based organisations.

Philip was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours in 1999 for service to the community of Townsville.

Philip died on 18th June, 1999. Following his death, the Philip Leong Youth Programme was established to support young people in the region to pursue ideas or interests in industry or commerce. In 2000, he was named the Townsville Citizen of the 20th Century.

Philip Leong witnessed enormous growth in Townsville, from when he first arrived and the population was around 20,000, to about 120,000 in the mid-1990s. He made a significant contribution to the commercial and economic development of the Townsville region during his lifetime, creating employment for thousands of citizens.



Philip Leong  
CityLibraries Townsville, Local History Collection



Philip Leong Store, Hermit Park, 1946  
CityLibraries Townsville, Local History Collection



Philip Leong Store, same location, late 1950s  
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