

People who donate their body to science now have new memorial at Woronora Memorial Park

Community members are invited to attend Woronora Memorial Park's official opening of the Wonderfully Made Memorial, which commemorates those who have left their body to science.

On Monday, 10 April, 2017 Woronora Memorial Park will unveil its first dedicated memorial to Human Tissue and Bodies left to Science. This will be officiated by The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP, Minister for Health and Medical Research, and also attended by Dr Marie Dziadek, Chief Medical Officer of The Garvan Institute. The official blessing will be conducted by the Most Rev. Bishop Terence Brady, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney.

Called Wonderfully Made, the memorial has been a labour of love between the Park and the Department of Health for many years. Its creation ensures that those whose loved ones have made one of the greatest gifts of all to humankind will have a beautiful place to remember them. And that those anonymous people, whose tissues were for many years left in a range of clinical settings, may be properly laid to rest.

The Wonderfully Made project began many years ago in 2002, when a national audit of human remains collected by the government and official institutions was conducted. Many were from coronial inquiries that stretched back years. The final audit included human tissue samples dating back to 1830. It also included specimens of ashed bone that had been used to assess the radioactive fallout in New South Wales from the Maralinga nuclear tests that were carried out by the British Government between 1955 and 1963.

Families were encouraged to identify and collect any remains, but many were lost to the mists of time and the often-absent record keeping of their day. A substantial number of the remains were those of indigenous people, which made repatriation even more ethically sensitive and challenging.

After a five-year moratorium, the Department approached Woronora to create a special memorial that would allow the remaining, unclaimed samples to be put to rest with dignity.

The memorial takes its name from Psalm 139, Verse 14: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." It also pays homage to those who have donated their bodies to the advancement of medical science.

"The psalm is as relevant today as it was when it was made thousands of years ago. The human body is wonderfully made and today, we're discovering even more amazing things about our bodies, through technologies like genome sequencing," said Graham Boyd, CEO of Woronora Memorial Park. "But there's a spiritual component as well, in terms of the wonderful gift these people have made."

The Memorial, designed by Nadia Lanfranco, has deep and abiding symbolism. Encircling the area is a series of bronze rocks picking out the universal Scouting symbol for 'Gone Home'. Orange roses, signifying passion, innovation, love and new beginnings will eventually drench the Memorial in a riot of fiery colour.

As you walk around the Memorial, you can see a series of bronze sculptures based on the same human body template but with parts missing. These sculptures align from a particular perspective to create a whole person.

“The human body sculptures symbolise both the sacrifice people have made to help future generations through science and the incredible and complex miracle that is the human body,” said Graham Boyd.

The Official Opening will be held on Monday 10 April at 10.15 at the Rose Gardens in Woronora Memorial Park. Morning tea will be served afterwards.

For media enquiries, please contact

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