



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SYDNEY

Speaking Points - FINAL

Parramatta Girls' Home Memorial Design Announcement

Wednesday 13th September 2017

Jubilee Room,

Parliament of New South Wales

FULL SPEECH

I, too, would like to pay my respects to the Elders of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, on whose land we stand, and to the Burramattagal people, the Darug people of Parramatta, as well as all First Peoples of our nation.

I am honoured to be here at this formal announcement today of the Parramatta Girls' Home Memorial Design.

'Never again.'

These are the words in the centre of this Memorial Design, out of which a spiralling pathway leads.

'Never again' are the words which we say today, as a community.

In acknowledging past history - the good and the bad, the just and the unjust - we can forge new pathways to the future.

From 1887 when Parramatta Girls' Home opened, until it closed in 1974, it is estimated over 30,000 girls passed through its doors. Established as an industrial training school for girls, the worst excesses of institutionalisation turned this site into a place of incarceration and abuse, denying women and children basic human rights.

The years of the Home's operation spanned almost a century of social history.

Bookended between the age of Queen Victoria and Germaine Greer, between the zeal of institutionalism and feminism, these years encompass vastly divergent social attitudes to women, to children, to education, welfare and justice. That the Home was open for so long is part of the tragedy of this history.

Acknowledging this past, Minister Goward, the Department of Family and Community Services, and the voices of past residents associated with the Memorial Project have come together to turn this once feared site into a place of shared memory and belonging.

This Memorial links past to present by engaging residents in the consultation and design process on how this history is remembered.

The etched 'paper doll' child figure on the sandstone Memory Wall of this winning design represents the many thousands of girls who became residents at this Home during this period.

This figure is also the defining icon of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Redress and Civil Litigation Report.

Significantly, it was also used by the Women's Liberation Movement in protests outside Parramatta Girls' Home between 1973, a campaign that led to the closure of the Home in 1974.¹

¹ <http://www.parragirls.org.au/parramatta-girls-home.php>

Over forty years later, here today, we reflect on the injustices of the past. These examples of abuse must never be forgotten and must never occur again.

It is with a great deal of admiration that I say to the former residents of Parramatta Girls' Home – thank you for your courage. This Memorial on an International Site of Conscience² will be the result of your courage.

On behalf of the people of New South Wales, I thank you for bravely sharing your stories at the Royal Commission, and for proposing this Memorial as a permanent place of reflection.

In the fulfilment of this project at the end of 2018, it is hoped that where once those walls enclosed and imprisoned, the warmth of this new Memorial will embrace and provide hope.

END

This Speech will be uploaded to the website

² <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/en/membership/parramatta-female-factory-precinct-project-australia/>