

Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre

Opening and Dedication of the New Entrance and Gates

7 September 2016

Good afternoon

It is my great honour and privilege to be here today to mark the occasion of the opening of the new entrance gates to the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre.

Almost 72 years ago, a great tragedy took place in this beautiful tranquil town of Cowra. Since then, various monuments – the Japanese Cemetery, the Japanese Garden, Cherry Avenue and the World Peace Bell – were built to symbolise the spirit of reconciliation between Japan and Australia.

Each of these monuments act as symbols that demonstrate what a small community can do to promote peace, which lies at the heart of Japan and Australia's enduring and dynamic relationship. The very presence of these tangible symbols of peace, friendship, and reconciliation ensures that successive generations of Japanese and Australians will continue to discover Cowra's lessons of peace.

Since its opening, the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre has become a place of national historic, spiritual and heritage significance. It has been visited by many Japanese and Australian citizens alike, and fosters the continuously enhancing relationship of our two countries. The people of Cowra have turned this otherwise negative, tragic incident into a positive, heartening story, which continues to impress many people in Japan and Australia.

The completion of this new entrance to the Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre fulfils a long held plan to provide visitors with a truly Japanese experience. The design follows Edo period architecture and the roof tiles were imported from Japan to ensure authenticity and complement the garden.

However, the significance of this new entrance goes beyond a simple restoration project. Mr Don Kibbler, Retiring Chairman of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre provided substantial input into the design of the entrance and its construction is thanks to local labour. Furthermore generous donations made by Mr and Mrs Gandel as well as Mitsubishi Australia made it possible to complete this project.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation to John and Pauline Gandel, and Mitsubishi Australia for their kind generosity as well as Mr Don Kibbler and the people of Cowra for their tireless effort in bringing this project to life.

This project demonstrates the ongoing cooperation between the people of our two countries. I truly believe that it is our responsibility to pass on the crucial message of Cowra to younger generations, and as such it seems vital to maintain and protect these tangible symbols for years to come.

Thank you.