



Media Release

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Artworks recognise contributions made by Aboriginal men and women in war and defending country

Seven sentinel artworks to create awareness of the contributions made by Aboriginal servicemen and women during times of conflict and war involving Australians, stand proudly at Yandi Park in Cockburn Central West.

The series of seven, 2m high cylindrical aluminium drawings supported by posts resembling Aboriginal spears are easily viewed as a journey while walking along the wetland boardwalk at the new park on Remembrance Drive.

The \$145,000 artwork was commissioned by the City of Cockburn and funded through its public art program.

Hamilton Hill artist Sharyn Egan created the works to recognise the contributions of Aboriginal people during times of conflict while defending their clans after the arrival of European settlement, to enrolling and fighting for their country alongside fellow Australians in the nation's defence forces.

The artworks are nestled among plantings alongside the boardwalk and the shields around each of the human images represent the 14 different Nyungar clans, evoking a feeling of guardianship of the land and its people.

The installation of this artwork coincides with NAIDOC Week (7-14 July) whose theme for 2019 is Voice. Treaty. Truth.

“The human scale images on the artworks represent Aboriginal service men and women, as well as some more traditional warrior figures from the frontier wars when Aboriginal people were forced to defend their land. But spears were no match for guns,” Ms Egan said.

“The artworks reflect the traditional ANZAC themes of endurance, courage, integrity, strength and mateship with many Aboriginal people signing up as Maori, Indian or Spanish during the first world war as Aboriginal people weren't allowed to sign up, and



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they wanted to fight for their country.

“Although the official numbers on participation are low, and more Aboriginal people would have fought than registered, they were hard to find because they weren’t registered as Aboriginal.

“By the Second World War, officials eased up a bit and turned a blind eye because they needed people to fight.

“Aboriginal people honestly believed things would be better in Australia when they got back, fighting side by side with their mates overseas, but they weren’t citizens when they returned and the same discrimination prevailed. No recognition of their citizenship was given until the 70s.”

Cockburn Mayor, Logan Howlett, said: “Sharyn Egan has uniquely captured the contribution Aboriginal men and women had made to initially protecting their homeland, through to their involvement in the world wars and other wars, where Australia stood shoulder to shoulder with their allies.”

“Sharyn’s renowned artwork is held in the City of Cockburn Administration Building, the National Museum of Australia, the Berndt Museum of Anthropology and many other locations,” Mayor Howlett said.

“The City is proud to acknowledge Sharyn’s amazing talents and her special gift of ‘giving back to the community’.”

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