

MEDIA RELEASE

Aboriginal Flag Now Flies Over Site of Titanic Dreamtime Struggle



For immediate release. February 9, 2023, Jenolan Caves, NSW

On Wednesday, February 8, at Jenolan Caves, Gundungurra Traditional Custodian, Auntie Sharyn Halls, raised the Aboriginal flag. The celebration included a Welcome to Country, a smoking ceremony, performed by Gundungurra man, David King, and a tree planting, in Jenolan's new Garden of Connection.

Jenolan Caves is in Gundungurra country and has held special significance to the indigenous people for tens of thousands of years. Knowledge is preserved through an epic dreamtime story of how the whole region near Jenolan came into being – the titanic life and death struggle between 2 ancestral spirits, one a giant eel-like creature, Gurangatch, and the other, a large quoll, Mirragan.

After Auntie Sharyn welcomed guests to country at 11am, and raised the Aboriginal flag, she and other guests participated in the planting of the new Garden of Connection. There were quite a few plants, and many enthusiastic participants took the opportunity to get their hands into the soil.

The plant species chosen are naturally found in the Jenolan Caves area and were selected in consultation with the traditional owners. Auntie Sharon, a respected champion of native bush regeneration, planted a *Banksia marginata*, commonly known as a 'Silver Banksia'. Jenolan's horticulturalist, Laura King, said, "I selected native plants that will thrive in the area - shrubs, grasses and groundcovers - giving a variety of shapes and leaf textures, so the garden will be attractive throughout the year, whether it is in flower or not."

After the planting, the ceremonial shovel was presented to Jenny Whitby, President of the Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation Society, as a prized addition to their extensive collection.

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This flag-raising ceremony is the culmination of several month's planning. Last July, staff erected a new flagpole. But torrential rain damaged Jenolan's only road, forcing the popular tourist attraction to close. Happily, on Wednesday, although rain threatened, this week's flag-raising ran smoothly.

The Aboriginal flag is a permanent addition, next to the national flag. Visitors will easily spot both flags and the new Garden of Connection, near Jenolan's historic schoolhouse which is only a short stroll to the dramatic Carlotta Arch lookout.

End of Release

IMAGES – please download images from this link: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/FQjRPzMAbwHKydFL9>

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