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New-look Aboriginal Children's Memorial Garden unveiled

The refurbishment of the Aboriginal Children's Memorial Garden at The Children's Hospital at Westmead has given patients, families and staff a refreshed place to gather, with the new-look garden unveiled in an official ceremony today.

Relaunched on Close the Gap Day, the garden commemorates the children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities under the policies of past governments and represents a place of healing and reconciliation.

Rita Williams, Senior Aboriginal Health Education Officer, led the conceptualisation of the garden in 1995 and guided the project through to its opening in 2007.

"Bringing a child into any hospital can be a very stressful experience for any parent but it can also be a very confronting experience for many Aboriginal families because so many Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their mothers when they went into hospital."

"This is something we don't want to ever happen again in the future and this is the very reason why we have created this Garden. The Aboriginal Children's Memorial Garden is here to remember those children that have passed away and to remind us that we need to move forward in our reconciliation towards a better future and not just for Aboriginal children but all other children," Rita said.

The makeover included the installation of a boulder from Dharruk and Gundungurra land in the Blue Mountains, one-of-a-kind Boomerang shaped benches, Australian native plants and herbs, a plaque acknowledging the Burrumattagal people, the Traditional Custodians of the Dharruk Nation land on which the Hospital stands and a dedicated poem from Aunt Edna Watson, Elder of the Dharruk Nation.

The garden also includes a formalised Apology from the Hospital for the part it played in the removal of Aboriginal children, which was installed at the original opening.

"The garden is here for everyone to enjoy. It's here so families can meet and have a yarn, to keep the memories of our loved ones and to be a reminder that the rights of all children matter," Rita said.

The refurbishment of the Aboriginal Children's Memorial Garden was proudly supported by Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation.