

NEWS RELEASE



The Hon. Graham West MP
Minister for Juvenile Justice
Minister for Youth
Minister for Volunteering
Minister Assisting the Premier
on Veterans' Affairs

Friday 31 July 2009

Paying Tribute to Cowra's Military Past

To mark 65 years since the Cowra Breakout, Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs, Graham West, visited Cowra to recognise this significant tragedy in Australia's military past.

Minister West laid a wreath at the Cowra Australian War Cemetery and planted a cherry blossom tree at the Cowra Japanese Gardens, with cherry blossoms representing Australian and Japanese soldiers who died during World War 2.

"234 Japanese prisoners and four Australian guards were killed as a result of an attempted escape from the Prisoners of War Camp in Cowra," said Mr West.

"This tragedy is forever etched in Australia's military history, and shapes Cowra's identity to this day.

"The continuing impact of the Cowra Breakout is clearly evident in the famous Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre.

"The NSW Government is committed to ensuring the tragedy is not forgotten.

"The Government continues to play an important role in the Japanese Garden in partnership with the Cowra Shire Council and Cowra Tourism Corporation," said Mr West.

Today was Mr West's first visit to Cowra in his capacity as Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr West inspected the Sakura Avenue cherry blossom trees that link the Japanese Garden to the Japanese and Australian war cemeteries.

He met Don Kibbler, the founder of the Japanese Garden and Chairman of the Cowra Japanese Garden Maintenance Foundation.

In addition, he visited the Prisoners of War Camp and Guard Tower, and Australia's World Peace Bell.

"Cowra's war time legacy and successful efforts in international cooperation make an invaluable contribution to our remembrance of those who served for the freedom we know today," said Mr West.

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