

Draft Statement of Significance

The Vietnam War Memorial Cherry Tree Walk is of high social value. The memorial is dedicated to the men and women who served Australia during the Vietnam War. The monument holds the names of the Australians who died in the Vietnam conflict whilst each cherry tree represents a life lost in the war. The monument has special significance as a 'surrogate grave' for those who were buried overseas or who could not be found and is imbued with meaning as a sacred space. The memorial has special meaning for relatives and friends of the fallen and the veterans who remain.

The cherry tree walk memorial has aesthetic significance – it is a place of seasonal beauty and inspiration, reflection and contemplation. The walk runs alongside the meandering Mittagong Rivulet passing through areas of open parkland which add to its scenic value. The memorial has aesthetic significance as a rare 1.3 km Taihaku cherry tree avenue of honour.

The ceremonial space and the monument are significant symbolic spaces associated with annual ceremonies and commemorations of the victims and veterans of the Vietnam War. The design of the monument is aesthetically significant due to the combination of symbolic elements – the circular mound, four monoliths inscribed with the names of the fallen in a garden bed with four Taihaku cherry trees that forms a living wreath flanking a central dedication monolith. The symbolic elements within their spatial arrangement form a dedicated sacred space within which wreaths and tributes are laid. The central mound is grassed, linking the monument with the surrounding lawn and emphasising the 'environmental' landscape character of the memorial. Also significant to the design is a grove of Australian Casuarina trees which form a backdrop to the monument and provide a juxtaposition with the Asian cherry trees.

The memorial has historical significance as it provides evidence of the Australian involvement in Vietnam War between 1962 and 1975.

The memorial has historical association with Effie Kerr a highly respected and driven person without whom the memorial would not have become a reality. Effie's legacy also represents the history of the Vietnam War in Australia as she initially protested against the Vietnam War and then later dedicated herself to ensuring respect and recognition was given to the service and sacrifice of those who served. The memorial is also historically associated with the Bowral Parks and Gardens Advisory Committee,

the Bowral Vietnamese Memorial Walk Trust and founders of the memorial such as landscape architect Kevin Gallagher who put Effie's and the Trusts' ideas into practice.

The Taihaku 'great white' cherry tree has historic value as a cherry tree once common in Japan that became extinct in its native land until it was reintroduced by English cherry collector Collingwood Ingram. Effie Kerr believed there was a parallel between the history of the Taihaku to that of the Vietnamese war veteran who'd been historically ignored in Australia to such an extent that they were also in danger of becoming extinct.

The memorial has rarity value. Whilst there are other cherry tree avenues of honour such as the one in Cowra, the Bowral Vietnam War Memorial avenue of honour is believed to be the only Taihaku avenue in Australia and is certainly the only avenue of cherry trees that form a Vietnam War Memorial avenue of honour. The memorial is one of only a few Vietnam War Memorials that carries the names of all those who died in the conflict. It is the only Vietnam War Memorial in the southern highlands and the only avenue of honour of such a length.

The Vietnam War Memorial has aesthetic value as an excellent example of an environmental landscape memorial that features an avenue of honour, a commemorative area and a dedicated monument within a circle and a grove of trees.

The memorial has social significance for veterans in USA and Canada who served with Australian service personnel and demonstrated their support for the memorial in 2006 when it was perceived to be under threat when the Mittagong Creek Reserve Plan of Management was being prepared. The walk has significance to the Wingecarribee community who value it as recreational resource and for its contribution to the sense of place of the locality.

The memorial is representative of the need for Australian communities to respect remember and commemorate those who died and did not return from overseas conflicts. The memorial has representative value as an example of Vietnam War Memorials in Australia and their symbolic representation of the sacrifice made by those who fought in the war.

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