

New artworks to be unveiled in Blacktown this weekend

Stacey Roberts, Blacktown Advocate
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Performance, sculpture and interactive artworks will be unveiled this weekend in an event aimed at responding to history, bringing to life the culture and imagining a future for the former Blacktown Native Institution site.

Artist Sharyn Egan's installation of seven large-scale native flannel flowers will be a semi-permanent installation at the site.

Egan, a Nyoongar woman from Perth, worked with the Mt Druitt-based Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Mt Druitt and local weavers to create the flowers out of colourful marine rope as a memorial to the Institution's residents.

"I chose flowers because it was a memorial to the children that were taken to that place from their parents... children are like flowers, they're pure and innocent," she said.



Artists Tony Albert, Lily Shearer, Frederick Copperwaite, Liza-Mare Syron and Sharyn Egan.
Picture: Joshua Morris

She said she was "really quite honoured" to have been invited to create a piece of artwork for the site. "I'm from the Stolen Generation over on the west coast, I was taken from my parents, so I've got a real feeling of empathy because it's part of my life," she said.

Egan's work is one of three being unveiled on Saturday at the site of the former Blacktown Native Institution on the corner of Richmond Rd and Rooty Hill Rd North in Oakhurst.

Ngara - Ngurangwa Byallara (Listen, Hear, Think - The Place Speaks) also includes pieces by Tony Albert and Moogahlin Performing Arts.

The works were commissioned by Blacktown Arts and the Museum of Contemporary Art and the artists were asked to address issues associated with the history of the site - one of the earliest known examples of the institutional removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

Queensland artist Tony Albert, a Kuku Yalanji man, also worked with a group of young people from Blacktown to create the piece *Gubangala Gumadangyiningi (Let's honour his/her spirit)*, to share positive memories across time.

Blacktown Mayor Stephen Bali said: "While acknowledging past wrongs, through this project we also aim to celebrate the Darug peoples' continuing cultural practices and connection to this place."

The work will be unveiled on Saturday from 4pm-8pm.

For more information on the event and the artworks, visit blacktownarts.com.au