

Welcome, I acknowledge the Gimwoy Walabura Yidinji people as the First Nations owners of the land where Seville stands, this area is known as Bookal Bookal which is the black lawyer vine. I pay my respects to the Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, culture and wisdom that has been passed down for hundreds of generations. Despite past histories, may we use this space in line with the national reconciliation theme for 2022 “Be Brave, make change” to unite peoples of all walks of life, and learn from one another on our journey toward growth, healing, and reconciliation.

I would like to acknowledge the following people and thank them for their attendance here today.

- Hon Warren Entsch – Federal Member for Leichardt
- The Elders and Traditional Owners of this Land
- The sisters of Mercy
- CEO Cairns Chamber – Patricia O’Neil

We also have some apologies for today who would have loved to been here with us.

- Member for Cairns Michael Healy
- Mayor Bob Manning and the Councillors
- TTNQ CEO – Mark Olsen
- Bishop James Foley

We began our journey on this project in the leadup to Australia Day in 2021. I was becoming increasingly alarmed at the anger, and dare I say hatred on social media. I struggled greatly with this, and I thought this is something that needs to change, and it needs to change now. Out of this mess a concept formed in my mind, and I explored this idea further with Carl Fourmile from Minjil. I did not want this space to be a token effort, I truly want it to be a space that was created as a team as a place for healing the gap between our First Nations people and the greater community of Cairns.

This site, which was formerly a convent, carries the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy who were instrumental in the establishment of many schools in FNQ, centres of education, and programs that embraced genuine warm, caring and helpful hospitality since the early 1900s. They were renowned for the coming together of all walks of life and it is only fitting that we continue this spirit of Mercy.

This garden would not have been possible without the financial support of the Sisters of Mercy and the cooperation of Carl and Minjil. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of my amazing team here who progressed this garden during my absence – Thank you Sam, Priscilla, Mary-Ann, Brydie and Graham.

I am very pleased to announce today that Seville and Minjil have entered into a partnership to deliver Indigenous Cultural Experience Tours here on site. Participants will be taken on a journey through our rainforest and creek and learn about the trees and their fruits, traditional herbs, local flora and fauna, and the story behind them along with traditional dance and music, all just 10 minutes from the CBD and the main accommodation houses.

I will now ask Sr Faye Kelly lead us and bless this garden and its purpose.

Thank you, Sr Faye, for that lovely blessing, I now ask the Honorable Warren Entsch to come forward and officially open this garden.

Thank you, Warren, for your kind words and for being here with us today.

I now hand you over to Carl Fourmile and his amazing team from Minjil and after their performance please join us for some of our famous extravagant hospitality in our dining room

Wow, what an amazing performance by Minjil, this is just a taste of what will be experienced on the Indigenous Cultural tours. – Thank you again for being here today, please spend some time and take a walk through the rainforest pathway, it only takes about 5 – 10 minutes.