

MEDIA RELEASE



Polding Centre
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St Patrick's Church honours Aboriginal leaders Bennelong and Barangaroo

11 December 2021

Her Excellency, the Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC, the Governor of NSW is unveiling two bronze sculptures on the grounds of St Patrick's Church in central Sydney **on Sunday 12 December**, honouring Aboriginal leaders, Bennelong and Barangaroo.

A senior man of the Eora people, Bennelong, served as a mediator between the Eora and the British in the late 18th and early 19th century and travelled with Governor Arthur Phillip to England in 1792.

His wife Barangaroo was also a leader of the Eora nation who provided for the clan's men with fish caught in and around Sydney Harbour, using a simple black wood canoe and was known for her strong pride in her culture.

The Parish Priest at St Patrick's, Fr Michael Whelan SM said he hoped the statues remind Sydney Catholics of the long custodianship which many generations of Indigenous people have maintained with the land.

"These statues, which will be here forever, I hope, will keep reminding the Catholic community, as Pope Francis reminds us, to embrace everyone, no matter what their spiritual beliefs are", he said.

The statues were prepared by Sydney sculptor, Roger Apte, who has completed similar projects at St Patrick's in the past, including a statue of St Vincent De Paul Society founder, Charles O'Neill.

"I was honoured to do it because there are so little celebrations of the positive achievements and characters who were prominent in Sydney for the Aboriginal people who were here at that time", he said.

Roger worked under the guidance of Eora woman, Theresa Ardler, who is the Director of Gweagal Cultural Connections, an organisation which provides Aboriginal spirituality and cultural lessons for school-aged children.

Ms Ardler said she was looking forward to delivering the Welcome to Country at the unveiling of the new statues in what will be a proud moment for her people.

"Both Bennelong and Barangaroo were great leaders of their time. Bennelong was quite courageous travelling to England at that time and this sets a powerful example for others to follow on how Sydney can better embrace its rich Indigenous history", she said.

Media are invited to attend the unveiling of the new sculptures of Bennelong and Barangaroo.

Time: 12:45pm, Sunday 12 December

Location: St Patrick's Church, 20 Grosvenor St, The Rocks

Interviews are also available.

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