

Local News & Events

A place in the heart of 'real Australia'

On February 17, a gathering of friends and family came together in the dusty cemetery of Bourke, north-western NSW, to unveil a stone sculpture to mark the grave of Fred Hollows.

The renowned eye surgeon passed away thirteen years ago, but as the service showed, he is still alive in the hearts of many. Even those that never met the man are drawn to his grave to share a moment in their own way.

A young child scrambles across the large stone that now rests at the site. Soon a scruffy looking dog follows him up onto the rock. Then more kids. The sculpture is more play equipment than headstone and according to Fred's 24-year-old son, Cam Hollows, that's exactly how the part-time mountaineer would have liked it.

"He was a bit of a climber in his youth in New Zealand, and he seemed to believe



Photo | The new stone sculpture lies horizontally in the middle of the picture. It is the centrepiece of a number of memorials to Fred, including the sculpture that stands vertically in the background.

that as kids we should do a lot of climbing. He was always stopping the car and getting us to climb a hill, a fence, or a wall or something," said Cam.

The Hollows family are overjoyed with the sculpture, which replaces the old stone slab that was only meant to be temporary.

"The kids can come here and climb on it and sit on it – it is a much more living bit of rock than the one that used to be here," said Cam, who took on the role of MC at the dedication service.

Other speakers included Gabi Hollows, author Tom Keneally, Father Frank Brennan and Phillip Sullivan, who spoke

as a representative of the local Indigenous community.

Phillip said that while he never met Fred, his mother spoke of him. He learnt that Fred was a man who fixed eyes, but he was also something else. He was someone who saw things from his heart.

"He didn't see an old black woman sitting down, or an old African woman sitting down, or an old white woman sitting down – he just saw an old woman,"

"Yes he was an eye doctor, but he was a very special eye doctor because he saw things with his spiritual eye, and that is why he went out and did what he did," said Phillip.



Photos | Left: Phillip Sullivan (left), Father Frank Brennan (centre) and Cam Hollows (right) share a moment of quiet reflection. Right: Fred's son Cam removes a ceremonial burial pall crafted by artists from the Indigenous community of Enngonia. Two of Fred's daughters, Emma (left) and Ruth (centre) watch on.

Photos courtesy of www.hollows.org/photolibrary



➤ Fred chose the red earth of Bourke, NSW as his final resting place because it represented the 'real Australia' that he loved.