

GARDEN DESCRIPTION SENSORY GARDEN

The Queanbeyan Sensory Garden was designed to enhance the sensory experience of being in a garden, especially for people with disabilities. Gardening and being outdoors in general are now recognised as major contributors to the wellbeing of city dwellers throughout the world. People with disabilities need this kind of boost to their wellbeing more than most.

The Sensory Garden was developed in a partnership between Queanbeyan City Council and Richmond Fellowship, an established provider of support services for people in the Canberra region with a mental illness. Richmond Fellowship clients contributed to a significant art project coordinated by local artist Dianna Quiggin – the creation of over 200 hand-crafted tiles set on the low walls around the garden beds. Each tile tells its own unique story: the hand-print of a local toddler; nature-themed tiles with impressions of leaves, gumnuts, and other local flora; messages in text and images.

“Even more important than the tiles are the unique, human bonds that were formed in creating them,” Ms Quiggin said.

The Sensory Garden was officially opened on 28 September 2013 by mayor Tim Overall during Queanbeyan’s 175th birthday. As well as the tile project, the garden features a series of Aboriginal totem poles by the Ngambri people, Morty the snail by Neil Dickinson, the Gardener’s Gate by Alan Neal, Queanbeyan City Council Head Gardener, and two musical instruments – the UFOonium created by local musician/artist Jack Waring-Dallwitz from a recycled gas cylinder, and a sonic bench by Kim Bowman. This garden appeals to everyone.

The garden is planted with scented flowering shrubs and trees, herbs with aromatic foliage, several Magnolia trees with a velvety underside to their leaves, groundcovers soft to the touch, grasses with a slight prickle to their seedheads, succulents that look and feel juicy, citrus trees with their dark yet glossy leaves. Fully accessible, the garden has broad paths with a firm surface, raised beds to make it easier for everyone to touch and smell the plants, and retaining walls for the weary to sit upon. Even the ground surface in places offers a subtle sensory experience to your feet or your wheels.

The Sensory Garden is enhanced by its beautiful surrounds: established Chinese elms, attractive planting in the nearby carpark off Waniassa Street, the large open spaces of Ray Morton Park and playground. Located next to Queanbeyan River just across from the City Centre, the Sensory Garden also has interesting neighbours: the historic O'Neill's Cottage, now home of the Queanbeyan Art Society, and the *Riverbank of Queanbeyan* café with its lovely outdoor setting.