



Robyn Parker MP

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Heritage

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMUNITY CELEBRATES BUTTERFLY CAVE DECLARATION

Environment Minister Robyn Parker was welcomed with a smoking ceremony today as she joined the local community to celebrate the declaration of Butterfly Cave as the State's 91st Aboriginal Place.

The Minister said the declaration of Butterfly Cave marked a long journey for the local Aboriginal community to have the significance of the site formally recognised and protected.

"I am proud to be a part of today's celebrations that acknowledge the enormous effort sustained by the local Aboriginal community, particularly the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council, to have Butterfly Cave declared an Aboriginal Place," Ms Parker said.

"This successful declaration was a product of a very strong collaboration between Aboriginal Elders, the Aboriginal community, local groups such as the Save our Suburbs and Sugarloaf and Districts Action Group and the landholder, Hammersmith Pty Ltd.

"Most importantly, it has been the work of the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council that initiated and worked to develop the nomination documents for Butterfly Cave Aboriginal Place.

"This is also the first Aboriginal Place to ever be declared within the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council area.

"I know the declaration has been warmly welcomed by the entire community.

"The Aboriginal community and I are particularly pleased with the proactive and culturally sensitive and respectful approach by the landowner and developer Hammersmith Management Pty Ltd, to ensure the cave and its cultural values are well protected.

"Aboriginal Places such as the Butterfly Cave are areas of special significance to Aboriginal people in NSW so it is important that we recognise this formally.

Ms Parker said that Butterfly Cave was used as a traditional meeting and place of ceremony by Awabakal women.

"It was a place that provided a safe haven for women to hold ceremonies, birth babies, bathe and teach young women the ways of the Awabakal," Ms Parker said.

"The cave is not far from the culturally significant Mt Sugarloaf Mountain where many male ceremonies took place.

"As you stand here today it is very easy to imagine the women staying around the safe haven of the Butterfly Cave while the men went on to Mt Sugarloaf for ceremony.

“The declaration of this area as an Aboriginal Place, recognises that Aboriginal culture is living and continuing, and that the connection of Aboriginal people to the land and culture is immensely important to their wellbeing and future.

The area is highly valued by the Aboriginal peoples and it still used as an area for the continuing education of young girls by female Elders.

Aboriginal Places may be of special cultural significance because of their spiritual, ceremonial, historical, social, or educational values.

Butterfly Cave is also cared for and respected by the local non-Aboriginal residents. Local residents have always known the special values found around Butterfly Cave and have now found a way to have the area acknowledged as a very special place.