

Speech

Address By

His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)

On the occasion of

Opening of the Garden of the Grieving Mother

Garden of the Grieving Mother, Ballarat
15 February 2017

There is perhaps no greater love than the love between a mother and child.

And amongst the tragedy of war, there is perhaps no greater pain than the pain of a grieving mother.

And today, at this garden, with this statue, we remember the young men—and women—who have died in battle and the toll it has taken on their mothers and their families.

We remember young lives dedicated to service.

Lives sacrificed for the nation.

Lives not yet fully lived that ended too soon.

Lives whose pain has now passed.

And we remember the mothers who—with the death of a child they have loved, raised and nurtured—have come to carry their own pain and grief.

For mothers—and fathers and families too—this grief can last and linger, disparage and despair.

This statue, this place, recognises this.

It acknowledges that sometimes being left behind can be the hardest part.

Because sons are not meant to die before their mothers.

War is not meant to take them away, but it does.

From the Moore Twins, Clement and Ina, born and raised right here in Ballarat and killed in the same battle in France:

· With us today is their mother's great grand-daughter Annette Calvert^[1].

To the young men of today, who lead the fight against terrorism and extremism—men like Cameron Baird awarded a posthumous VC for outstanding valour leading the way in battle in Afghanistan:

· And we are honoured that Cam's mum Kaye, and dad Doug are here also.

But as we reflect on such losses, we also remember to celebrate.

We celebrate lives of great purpose and real meaning.

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Lives distinguished by pride and service.

Lives that stood for all of us and the things we believe in and hold dear.

So, there is grief, lots of it, but there is also great honour and gratitude and of course immense pride.

We cannot bring the fallen back—touch them, feel them or hug them.

But we can remember and we pay tribute—to the sons and daughters, to the mothers and fathers, to love, loss and regret—and this garden is a big part of that.

[1] The statue was inspired by Annette Calvert's great-grandmother

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