

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the
Legislative Council
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Resources



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Sunday, 10 February 2019

SOUTHERN AURORA MEMORIAL GARDEN OFFICIALLY OPENED

A memorial garden to the Southern Aurora train accident and community response is now open in Violet Town, with support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes today officially opened the Southern Aurora Memorial Garden in Violet Town, 50 years after one of the worst train accidents in Australian history.

The Labor Government provided \$150,000 towards the establishment of the garden and events to commemorate the anniversary of the disaster in which nine people lost their lives, 117 were injured and many first responders and local community members were left with lasting effects.

The new garden, opposite the Violet Town Railway Station, includes a remembrance sculpture, as well as a 1km walking track from the memorial garden to the crash site where a carriage from the train is now stationed.

The garden will provide a permanent memorial to those who were killed or injured in the crash, as well as acknowledging those who courageously helped rescue people from the train and community members who assisted in the days and weeks following the tragedy.

The opening of the garden follows a weekend of commemorative activities organised by the Violet Town Action Group and the Strathbogie Shire Council including a vigil, memorial exhibition and art display, a community morning tea and a multi-faith service.

Additional funding was provided by the Violet Town Action Group, the Strathbogie Shire Council, V-Line, the Australian Rail Track Corporation and community fundraising activities.

The commemorative garden is another unique attraction for Violet Town - which is also home to the Honeysuckle Creek Precinct and the Violet Town Market, attracting more than 4000 visitors to the town each month.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

“Community members approached me with their dream of transforming a disused rail site into a reflective memorial garden and visitor destination to pay tribute to the lives lost in the disaster, and to remember the contributions from the community who responded and rallied together to assist following the accident.”

“I have strong roots in Violet Town with my paternal grandparents being raised here, so it is a huge honour as a local MP to be able to give back to this community and acknowledge their tremendous sense of selflessness, strength and resilience in responding to an unprecedented disaster.”

“The Violet Town community has done a wonderful job planning a respectful memorial and commemoration, and we’re proud to support this garden for residents and visitors to visit and reflect on the disaster and the community response.”