



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Mitchell Electorate: Leone
Family's Garden of Secrets**

SPEECH

Wednesday, 19 September 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Hawke, Alex, MP	Question No.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (09:36): I rise today to speak about the generous spirit of another family in my electorate who have worked alongside local community clubs and volunteers to raise financial support for charities over many years. Families in my electorate of Mitchell have a longstanding tradition of taking pride in their homes and gardens, both small and large. Our shire is known as the 'Garden Shire'. Many in our community today think this term is an anachronism, but more than two-thirds of our shire is still rural land used for farming and other agricultural industries. The Orange Blossom Festival and the garden competitions, which were part of the festival and saw some of the most beautiful gardens being created with time, love and patience by families, are great memories. All of this history reflects the basic tenets of our community and the ethos that endures in our community. This is another stunning endorsement of the values of communities anchored by property ownership. Ownership produces pride in community, pride in the land and pride in the home and provides the most certain of platforms for people to put back into the community they form a part of.

One such family generously opened their uniquely stunning garden recently on behalf of the Rotary Club of the Hills-Kellyville to raise funds for charity again. This Garden of Secrets, located in Castle Hill, is a unique and personalised landscaped garden that spans the family's magnificent property. Twenty-five years ago, Paul and Jennifer Leone moved into the property where they have stayed and raised their family of eight children. Sadly, they lost one of their sons to an accident. To honour his memory they set about creating a memorial garden in his name.

The Leones are a remarkable family who have not only opened their home to the general public but opened their hearts so that charities such as the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, Hart Walkers, Guide Dogs and many others will benefit from their generosity and hospitality. Over a two-day period, some 4,000 visitors walked through the east gate of the private home and were immediately transported into a place of tranquillity and colourful beauty, with classical music enhancing their senses. Twice per year, 18,000 bedding annuals are planted to produce a rich tapestry of colour and texture. Special features include transformation of the original horse area into an impressive fountain, life-size bronze sculptures, several water features, beautiful open spaces and manicured lawns, making it easier for families to enjoy their visit to this special place.

Like so many events held in my electorate, this event was well supported by some 50 volunteers drawn from the Rotary Club of the Hills-Kellyville, the Rotary Club of Castle Hill, the Inner Wheel Club of Baulkham Hills and Lantern Ladies from the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children. The volunteers worked tirelessly to cater for the large crowd. Over \$20,000 was raised in two days in support of these charities. Like so many other families in my electorate, the Leone family are stalwarts of the community who look beyond their own circumstances to encompass the lives of others. This recent event marked the fourth time the Leone family have opened their garden for charity, and they have so far raised over half a million dollars. Some things change in our world, but the pride and the community spirit of the Leone family are a great example to all of us.