Living Memorial keeps the Anzac Spirit Alive

Anzac Day was alive with relevance and reality at St Leo's Catholic College, Wahroonga this year.

A living memorial to a past student who died in Vietnam at an age just two years older than current Year 12 students made the Anzac memory poignant, pertinent and powerful.

An Anzac Memorial Garden of Remembrance dedicated to Bryan Thomas Cullen was opened and blessed at the end of April, paying tribute to an Old Boy who lost his life whilst serving in Vietnam.

For many years a photograph of Bryan hung in the St Leo's College Chapel. This young man died on 27 November 1967 of wounds received in action while serving in Phuoc Tuy Province of Vietnam with the 7th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, he was just 20 years old.

Bryan's sister, Jill Fitzsimmons and her family travelled from Goulburn for the ceremony, and a wreath was laid in Bryan's memory.

The students heard that Bryan was a regular teenager, brother and young man – he loved his family, his mates and was keen to serve his country. It was a moving tribute that put a real story behind the black and white photograph in the Chapel.

The Anzac Memorial Garden inspired by Laurie Till, a long term employee of the College, was thoughtfully designed and constructed by St Leo's senior Construction students under the leadership of their teacher Mr Chris Sammut.

The College was also supported by the Federal Government, Hornsby RSL, Thomson Landscape Garden Supplies and Able Timber and Hardware.

The materials used in the construction and the plants and colours are all symbolic representations paying tribute to those brave men and women who have served. A Sydney Blue Gum tree felled on site was carved to form a Seat of Remembrance in honour of Bryan.

The St Leo's Anzac Garden was blessed by Bishop David Walker.

Special guests at the ceremony included, Bishop David, Fr Pat McMaugh, Mr Terry Blanchard (past Principle), Mr Matt Kean MP, Mr Nick Berman (Mayor), past teachers and current members of the parent community.

The ceremony was enhanced by St Leo's student members of local Army and Air Force Cadet Units, as well as past students currently serving in the Defence Forces. Cadet Nathan Elliott (Yr 10) played the Last Post on the bugle his Great Grandfather had used at the Western Front in WWI.

Linking this garden to the memory of Bryan Cullen will help students reflect and remember the Anzac tradition – the ideals of courage, endurance and mateship. To have a living memorial to a past student who gave his life for his country will help keep the Anzac tradition relevant and alive for the future St Leo's community.