

SIEVX Memorial for Canberra Lakeshore

A controversial 'people's memorial' to the 353 people who drowned on the refugee boat SIEVX has been given permission to go ahead this September.

300 schools, churches, and community groups created poles to remember each of the dead, who were almost all mothers and young children. The spectacular memorial is 300 metres long and will snake across the lakeshore at Weston Park in Canberra's west. It required permission from both the ACT government, which was granted earlier this year, and the National Capital Authority, who gave an affirmative answer just this week.

Psychologist and author Steve Biddulph, who helped fund the project for the four years it has taken, said the organizers were "overjoyed". "Nearly 1000 school students helped create the poles, and their compassion and concern for the people who drowned is a very hopeful sign for Australia. This memorial tells the world that Australia is a country that cares, that is not just defined by fear and greed".

The poles were brought to Canberra last year but refused permission to be erected, and instead were held up by hand in a ceremony opened by Chief Minister Jon Stanhope. This year the poles will be stood up in the ground, in their intended form, to stand for six weeks. The organizers, based in the Uniting Church but combining many other denominations and faiths, hope one day soon to make the memorial permanent. But they are pleased this year to have it standing during September and October, so that Australians can decide if it should be part of the National Capital's long term identity.

The Memorial will be opened at a special ceremony on Sunday September 2nd.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS OR VERIFICATION:

Please contact Steve Biddulph on dpforest@bigpond.com
or Beth Gibbings on 0428622 309.

Hi res photographs available on request.

www.sievxmemorial.com